THE JAGADGURU REPLIES

H. H. SRI SRI JAGADGURU
ABHINAVA VIDYATEERTHA
MAHASWAMIGAL

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Preface

This book is a translation of a Tamil book containing a compilation of the dialogues of our Acharyal, the Jagadguru Shankaracharya of Sringeri. The translation work was under taken and completed in a short time by my good friend Sri P. N. Neelakantan. In bringing out this book, my thanks are also due to Sri. K. Srinivasan and Sri H. N. Shankar, who did the proof corrections, to Sri. V. Raghurama Reddy of M/s Roopa printers and Sri Krupananda of M/s Yoga sadana press for undertakrng the task of printing.

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R. M. UMESH
Press Secretary to
His Holiness the Jagadguru
Shankaracharya of Sringeri
Sharada Peetam

Publisher's Note

The book published in 1983 having been fully sold out, at the request of several devotees, it has been re-printed with the gracious blessings of H. H. Jagadguru Bharathi Theertha Mahaswamigal of Sringeri Sharada Peetam.

Devotees are requested to secure the Publication from either of the offices and enrich themselves and pursue their sadhana for attainment of the ultimate goal.

P. R. HARIHARAN
Trustee
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Mysore

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1. Guru

Disciple (D) : Is a GURU necessary for one who desires MOKSHA ?

Acharyal (A) : Very much.

D : What is the chief characterestic of a GURU ?

A : A GURU should be a JNANI having realised the truth ; He should be interested in the higher good of His disciple.

D : Now-a-days, many put on the appearance of sages. This being the case, how is one to find a real GURU ?

A : No specific rules exist regarding this. If we are very sincere. ISHWARA Himself will lead us to a SADGURU. We can see for ourselves whether the person whom we consider as a GURU is a JNANI and desires our well-being. Even-though it is difficult to conclude whether one is a JNANI or not, we can apply to a certain extent, the description of a JNANI as mentioned in the BHAGAVADGITA. However, while doing this, it should be remembered that the description was not given with a view to aid the selection of a JNANI.

D : What should be the attitude of the disciple towards the GURU ?

A : He should not view the GURU, ISHWARA and ATMA as different from one another.

ईश्वरो गुरुरात्मेति

It is said that ISHWARA, GURU and ATMA are one and the same.

He should always act per the instructions of the GURU. Even if others' opinion were to be different only the GURU's command should be considered as final in any matter.

D : Can one who has not attained JNANA bestow the knowledge of the ATMA on another ?

A : न नरेणावरेण प्रोक्त एष सुविज्ञेयो बहुधा चिन्त्यमानः । अनन्यप्रोक्ते गतिरत्र नास्ति ।

"If taught by one who does not know the ATMA, even if deeply inquired into, he cannot know the ATMA. Only if taught by one who has realised the ATMA he attains MOKSHA." Thus has it been said in the KATHOPANISHAD.

D : Is it wrong on the part of one desirous of spiritual life to listen to others commenting adversely on GURU or ISHWARA ?

A : Yes.

D : What should one do in such a situation ?

A : If the man who criticises is amenable to reasoning he may be asked not to criticise. If not, the disciple should leave his presence.

D : What may a person desirous of going to a GURU and leading a spiritual life do prior to the attainment of a GURU ?

A : If UPANAYANA has been performed, he can do GAYATHRI JAPA as much as possible. He can also do ISHWARA PUJA mentally. There is no restriction at all for this. This method of performing PUJA has been clearly explained in MRUTYUNJAYA MANASA PUJA STOTRA, SHIVA MANASA PUJA STOTRA etc. It is good to develop devotion towards ISHWARA by dedicating to Him the fruits of all actions. Firm dispassion should be acquired by means of discrimination. If one prays to ISHWARA sincerely, He will enable one to get a SADGURU.

D : At what age should spiritual practices be started ?

A : The earlier we start, the better. Were not PRAHLADA and DHRUVA young boys when they started their spiritual practices ?

D : Is GURU's UPADESA necessary for one interested in material life ?

A : Is a doctor necessary for one affected by a disease ?

D : Yes.

A : If a man desires pleasure in wordly life, does he get it to the extent he wants ? Not at all.

Even to attain this happiness, would it not eb wise to seek guidance ? The blessings of a Knower of the Truth are extremely potent. Hence, whatever may be the way of life desired, it is advisable to seek the grace of and guidance from a Saint.

D : Even though some people wish to carry out the instructions of their GURU, they do not always act accordingly. They also have a wrong idea that they can get happiness through some other means. How are we to prevent such thoughts ?

A : Will not even a materialist have an impression regarding a Saint to the effect—"He is much more knowledgable than I am ?"

D : Certainly, yes.

A : Will not a GURU consider the well-being and the difficulties of His disciple ?

D : Yes.

A : GURU wishes SREYAS for us. He knows more than we do. He has understood our difficulties. If He gives us some advice, will it not be for our own good ? If the disciple firmly establishes such an idea in his mind, he will essentially act according to his GURU's instructions. Even if difficulties arise in following His instructions' he should think for a moment-"It is good for me if I act as per His instructions." Then, he can follow His instructions unhesitantly.

D : Some people hesitate to disclose to their GURU everything that Is in their mind. Such being the case, they do not inform the GURU of all the difficulties or sufferings in their mind. The GURU has given this advice for my own good. But there are certain difficulties in following it. I am of limited capacity. How than am I to act as per His instructions ?–such a doubt may arise when it is difficult to follow His commands.

A : Is it not sheer foolishness if one hides the facts about one's disease when going to a doctor ? Therefore, we should spell out our difficulties to our GURU without any hesitation. It is our duty. Even if that is not done, as the GURU is a Knower of the truth. His instructions will be only in accordance with the Will of ISHWARA. This being the case, wherever He says will be appropriate for us. If we do not have the capacity to follow His instructions, even that capacity will be obtained by His grace. An ideal disciple will indeed act as per the GURU's Instructions and not give place to thoughts such as–'Is it possible for me to do as He says ? Shall I try something else ?' If we follow our GURU's instructions, It does not mean that we are unintelligent. It only implies that we have surrendered for our own good to a power superior to us.

D : With GURU's grace, Is it possible for even a henious sinner to progress in spiritual life ?

A : If the blessing of ISWARA and GURU are obtained, even the worst sinner can progress However, we should not be careless thinking thus. We can progress in life merely by His grace'.

D : Sometimes, even those who have committed many ill-deeds become recipients of the blessings of Great Souls. Certain others might not be as much on the wrong path. Still, they are seen to be deprived of those blessings. Though Great Souls do not harbour partial notions such as- 'He is my favourite ; this one is not', why then should such differences occur at all ?

A : We should infer the cause from the effect. A certain person is a greater sinner than another. Yet it can be seen that he enjoys Divine Grace to a greater extent. There should be some reason behind this. What could it be ? The cause may be conceived as- 'If the life of the sinner in this birth is looked into, no reason can be found, However, enquiry of this birth alone is insufficient as there has been a birth previous to this. There, he might have done very many good deeds. Therefore, in this birth, he becomes a recipient of Divine Grace. Hence it can be inferred that eventhough he may not be leading a morally sound life now, as he is receiving a Saint's blessings, he should have acquired PUNYA (merit) in his previous birth itself. It is wrong to think instead of analysing as above, that a Saint is partial. Nothing remains to be attained by a JEEVANMUKTHA. Restricted notions such as-'I have a liking towards this person, and therefore, I should shower my blessings on him; the other individual is not a favourite of mine, and so, I need not bless him'-are not entertained by Him. Whether He chooses to bless others or not. He stands to gain naught as He has attained that which is to be attained.

D: If it is only due to merit aquired in the previous birth that one gets Divine Grace, then will not even that (the Divine Grace) become an object brought, by PUNYA ?

A: The light of a lamp falls on its surroundings. One may study SASTRAS in that light, while another may, paying no attention to it, spend time sleeping Similarly, the Great Souls are always showering their Grace. Each one can derive benefit from it depending an one's own mentality. If one takes a big vessel to a pond' one can bring a large quantity of water. Just because it is said that a small vessel con hold little water. It does not mean that the vessel itself is the limit for the capacity of the pond. Similarly, if one has acquired merit in one's previous birth, one might have got the good company of a Great Soul, but at the same time may not be making use of it. However, another one, though not having got the same opportunity, by exploiting the opportunity to the greatest extent possible may in a short period, become the recipient of the Grace of a Great One.

D : If the GURU has blessed His desciple with His PADUKAS, how should the disciple respect them ?

A : Whatever reverence he has towards his GURU himself, the same should he have towards the PADUKAS also. Everyday, after prostrating before them with true sincerty, he should place sandalpaste and flowers on them. Though it is good to offer ABHISHEKA to them daily if they are made of wood and if the disciple desires that They be with him for long, he himself can decide how sensible it would be to offer ABHISHEKA. If he pays respects to his GURU's PADUKAS with sincerity or if he prays to them with true devotion, he will get the fruit of the very same action performed at his GURU's feet. Hence, he should never be careless as regards the PADUKAS of his GURU.

D : If a disciple desires to meditate on the PADUKAS of his GURU, how should he do that ?

A : He can meditate on the Feet of the GURU with His PADUKAS just as He wears them.

D : How should a disciple conduct himself in the presence of his GURU ?

A. He should have a reverential attitude towards Him. He should serve Him whenever he gets an opportunity. However, he should also get His permission before doing so. If any clarification is required, he can ask Him when He is free or not engaged in any other activity. He should be very sincere in his studies, always thinking that it is his great fortune to learn from his GURU. He should always keep in mind the instructions of his GURU and lead his life accordingly.

2. Ishwara

D: Some people get a doubt as to whether ISHWARA really exists or not because they are unable to see Him. Cannot ISHWARA by some means, reveal to them His existence so as to induce SHRADHA (faith) in them?

A: ISHWARA Himself seems to have been caught in a fix. If he were to give DARSHAN to them, He should assume some form. On seeing the form, people may say-"You have a form Therefore you are not Omnipresent. So, you cannot be ISHWARA". If He does not give them DARSHAN by assuming a form, they can again say-"We do not see ISHWARA Hence there is no ISHWARA". Thus, there are some people who do not believe in ISHWARA whether. He takes a form or not. In this situation, what indeed can ISHWARA do ?

Veriety is the nature of the world. We have the group of atheists also. Faith in ISHWARA can be induced and further developed but there is no use in attempting to induce faith by force. Arguments can be put forth and actual experiences of many devotees may be cited. Many wonderful incidents that have taken place can be narrated and on their basis, instances clarifying the existence of ISHWARA can also be given. What has been made known in the SASTRAS can also be quoted. Still, if one does not believe that ISHWARA exists, nobody can help.

D : Can a devotee see ISHWARA ?

A : You mean with form?

D : Yes.

A : ISHWARA though without form, can take one for the sake of His devotees. If we have limitless devotion, we can definitely see ISHWARA'S form. There is no doubt at all about this.

D : Does ACHARYAL mean that one can see the form taken by ISHWARA only mentally or that one can perceive Him even with eyes ?

A : ISHWARA is capable of giving DARSHAN both ways.

D : Does ACHARYAL say that He can be seen, can be talked to and can be touched ?

A : Yes. If there is so pure a devotion, ISHWARA is sure to reveal Himself. When He does appear, why cannot one talk with Him ?

D : Can this happen even in this KALIYUGA ?

A : What link is there between a devoted person seeing ISHWARA and the KALIYUGA ?

D : Who can get ISHWARA's vision ?

A : He who does not desire anything other than ISHWARA can see Him. Limitless devotion compels ISHWARA to come to us.

D : How can one know whether the experience had one in connection with ISHWARA is real or not ?

A : For him who has had a real experience, such a doubt will not arise.

D : What about the others ? Can they not think that His experiences may be due to hallucination or self-hypnosis ?

A : What does one who has had the experience lose by others accepting it or not ? The acceptance or otherwise of others does not in the least affect the experience of that person. Though this is the case, I will give a more direct answer to your question. Suppose that ISHWARA, while appearing in a vision, gives a fruit or some other object to His devotee. if the fruit remains with the disciple even after ISHWARA disappears, then it can be realised that the experience was real. Such an experience will change the mentality of the devotee. Though the vision experience may last only for a short duration, its impression lasts long. Further, those who have had such experience become capable of encouraging others

If the person who has had the Divine experience with ISHWARA is quite healthy, why should he, all of a sudden start concocting things? If a man is to get involved in self-hypnosis, he can do that anytime. On the other hand, special experiences such as those described above are not experienced at one's will. By such an analysis, the difference between a true experience and that due to hallucination can be realised.

D : Why is there so much suffering in this world? Since it is He who created this world, is He not responsible for these troubles?

A : One experiences sufferings only because of one's past deeds. One's actions must bear fruits. As the actions of the previous births yield fruits now, one suffers in this birth. It is wrong to say that ISHWARA is the cause of teese sufferings, as the human-beings have freedom either to follow the injunctions of the SASTRAS or to transgress them. Man acquires PUNYA or PAPA as a result of his actions and

ISHWARA just gives the fruits of those actions. That is all. When it is said that it is the wrong action of previous birth that causes suffering in this birth, one can ask as to what the cause of the suffering experienced in the previous birth was. The answer for this is–'It is the KARMA (action) or the births prior to that birth'. As SAMSARA (cycle of birth and death) is beginningless, it is improper to question when the first birth was, in which, we started life without any KARMA. Creating the Universe, during each KALPA. ISHWARA just brings forth what was in the previous KALPA and does not 'create' anything afresh.

D: It is said that ISHWARA is aware of past, present and future. If He knows what is going to happen, then it means that it has already been predetermined how people will act in future. If that is the case, man indeed has to act according to the dictates of destiny. On the other hand, if one can act contrary to the spiritual injunctions, it would imply that He cannot decide the future. Therefore, how can one say that He is Omniscient ?

A: In reality, the world is a product of MAYA, while ISHWARA is the Controller of MAYA. In this sense, everything goes on according to His will that is appearing as the free-will of people, and also as fate. If considered in this way, ideas, namely, that He is Omniscient and that everything need not go according to fate can be understood without contradiction. Let us suppose that one does not prepare for one's examination. Then, can we not say with certainly that one will not succeed in the examination? Just because we say this, can it be said that the student does not have freedom to read or not read before the examination? Definitely not. In the same way, if it can be considered that He has understood all His creations, there is no room for any difficulty in asserting that ISHWARA is Omniscient.

3 Puja to Ishwara with form

A FOREIGNER (F)

F: Do Hindus worship many Gods?

A: We believe that there is only one Supreme Entity Who has no form and Who is responsible for creation, sustenance and annihilation of the entire Universe. However, He assumes many forms for the sake of His devotees. With whatever name and in whichever form His devotees seek after Him, accordingly do they worsip Him. You might have heard of names such as INDRA. These are merely the port-folios held at different times by the JIVA which has acquired PUNYA. We should not get confused by mistaking such posts for the previously mentioned Supreme Being.

F: Will your Holiness kindly say something about worship ?

A: We do not worship mere stones. If we had on seeing a stone idol we would have addressed it as 'O Stone' and not as 'O Lord'. We worship, the Supreme Lord with idols as aids to our worship, considering that He resides in them. In the temple Deities, Divine Presence is installed through the KUMBHABHISHEKA performed to consecrate the idols, it being strengthened by sincerity and TAPAS on the part of the priests performing the PUJA and by special characterestics of certain idols. Though without form, ISHWARA by His compassion is capable of giving DARSHAN to His devotees. He indeed does so.

F: During PUJA, I saw your Holiness pour water, milk, etc. What do they signify ?

A: During PUJA we worship ISHWARA. First, we offer Him a bath and that was the 'ABHISHEKHA' that you saw. We wipe Him with a cloth and then offer Him food. Eventhough the Limitless and Formless ISHWARA is not need of anything, our devotion makes us perceive and worship Him in idols. In terms familiar to you, ABHISHEKA is a 'shower-bath, that we give ISHWARA.

4. Marriage

D : The expenses of marriage rise sky high if dowry is involved, Many parents suffer as a result. What is the advice of ACHARYAL regarding dowry ?

A : Dowry has never been sanctioned by SASTRAS. "KANYA DANAM" itself is a great gift. No dowry is necessary to make that gift complete. If 'KANYA DANA' can be done even during the 'impurity period' of one year after the death of the girl's father, one can understand how worthy that gift is. The practice of accepting dowry arises only because of greed. It should be eliminated.

D : Does your Holiness advice disciples not to accept dowry ?

A : That would be My advice for all, whether they are devotees or not. Now-a-days, many say that dowry should not be accepted but only a handful keep it up by practice. Only when people stop such an evil practice will the acceptance of dowry cease.

D : What is the opinion of ACHARYAL as regards spending lavishly on marriages ?

A : The SASTRAS say that in a marriage ceremony, the MANTRAS should be chanted properly.

Nowhere have the SASTRAS prescribed that a big 'reception party' should be offered or that expensive silk sarees and different varieties of jewels be bought 'New clothing' does not mean expensive costumes. If huge expenditure is incurred in marriages, SASTRAS are not to be blamed. If people spend money extravagantly, is it not their fault ?

D : Among the subsects of Brahmins such as VAḌAMAL and BRIHACHARANA, can a person belonging to one subsect marry another belonging to a differrent subsect ?

A : The SASTRAS do not say anything about such subsects. As far as SASTRAS are concerned, people belonging to the same GOTRA should not marry among themselves. However, the SASTRAS do not prohibit inter subsect marriages.

D : In some places, there exists the practice of a girl marrying her uncle or uncle's son or some other relative. Some scientists opine that such an alliance is not conducive to the health of the child that would be born. Is there any injunction in SASTRAS that such a relationship should take place ?

A : In the VEDAS, there are explicit instructions with regard to UPANAYANA and SANYASA, but there is no explicit injunction at all that one should get married. However, it can be understood after going through the VEDIC MANTRAS pertaining to marriage and also the SMRITI texts, that the VEDAS permit marriage. There is no rule in the SASTRAS that one should get married to one's relatives. Neither is there any restriction that there should not be a marriage among relatives. It is My contention that it is not proper to get married to one's uncle. Getting married to such relatives has come into being by practice. People can themselves realise whether such a relationship should be encouraged are not.

5. Ganga

D : It is believed that the river GANGA effaces one's sins. Does it actually do so ?

A : Yes ; why is there any doubt about it ?

D : If GANGA would remove one's sins, then one can commit any sin and then get rid of it by bathing in the GANGA !

A : A dip in the GANGA will remove those occasional sins, which we repent for. It is not fair to expect that GANGA will free one from intentional sins done with a presumption like–'I will bathe in the GANGA and get rid of my sins'. However, just because of the above statement, one need not have even an iota of doubt regarding the greatness of GANGA. Crores of people travel a large distance with the firm faith that they would be purified by GANGA. ISHWARA does not want their faith to go unrewarded. A story is in vogue in this connection. Once, PARVATHI asked SHIVA whether GANGA would remove the sins of all. SHIVA guised as an old man took PARVATHI in the garb of His wife with Him to the banks of GANGAS. He told Her that he would pretend drowning and that She should raise an alaram that He be saved. Accordingly, She screamed to attract the attention of the passers by to rescue Her husband. The people around rushed to His rescue. The disguised PARVATHI stopped them and laid down this condition as earlier instructed by SHIVA–'Only that person who has not the silghtest trace of sin can touch my husband !'. Only one among them, without the least hesitation, swam across the river and rescued Him. Surprised, PARVATHI asked the rescuer if he was free from all sins. The man replied–'Did I not have a dip in the GANGA before saving your husband? My sins had vanished even at that instant'. Over the incident, SHIVA asked PARVATHI. 'What doubt need be there that all sins are washed away if one has faith like that of this person ?' Such is the greatness of the GANGA.

6. Social and Civil regulations

D : Is it necessary for a spiritual aspirant to take note of the social and civil regulations as no sin accrues by not adhering to them ?

A : These regulations should be followed as faithfully as the scriptual injunctions. It is we who set up these rules and that too, only for our convenience. Hence, it is unbecoming of a wise person not to follow them.

D : How will any sin accrue by not obeying these laws ?

A: No sin may accure, but if we transgress these codes of conduct, we will have to face appropriate punishments. For instance, there is a rule that one should drive to the left on roads. If we overlook this, we may meet with an accident. This of course, is a form of punishment.

7. Conversion of Religion

D : These are many people who have left the Hindu fold and have accepted other religions. If some of fhem desire to comeback to Hindu religion, is it possible to take them back ?

A : Whatever has been specified in the VEDAS should be our basis. It has not been said in the SASTRAS that one can leave the fold of SANATANA DHARMA. Hence he who has given up the SANATHANA DHARMA can only become a BRASHTHA (one who has fallen or one who has disobeyed the commands of the scriptures). Hence, there is no question of one having left SANATHANA DHARMA.

D : If he desires to lead his life as a Hindu once again, what should he do ?

A : Expiations for various sins have been prescribed in our scriptures. First, he can take appropriate steps to expiate the sin of not having followed the SANATHANA DHARMA. For example, with a dip in the Holy Ganges, if he maintains faith in our SASTRAS, we have no objection in treating him as a Hindu again.

D : Will it not be better, if there exists, with rules and regulations, a method of "converting one to a Hindu" to make the aspirant acceptable as Hindu ?

A : Not at all ; as it will be directly contradictory to our idea which concurs with the SASTRAS that 'he has not left SANATHANA DHARMA at all'.

D : Foreigners have never been Hindus. Can any thing be done to admit them into the Hindu fold ?

A : Manu has said, 'If a king conquers a foreign land, the people of that country also are eligible to follow the SAMANYA DHARMA (codes of conduct) prescribed by SASTRAS', As per this, we are ready to treat as Hindus, those foreigners who have faith in our Hindu religion. They also become eligible to follow the SAMANYA DHARMA.

8. Guidelines to perfect actions

D : On many occasions. it is not clear to us as to what exactly we should do. We are at cross roads in deciding what is right and what is wrong. What should we do in such cases ?

A : Sometimes, even knowing what is right and what is wrong, the mind is clouded by confusion because the evil path may seem easy while the righteous path may seem to be difficult. If the confusion is due only to this reason, we should choose only that which is proper. May it appear convenient or otherwise, rigtheous conduct is always the best. At other times. any of the alternatives may not be contradictory to the SASTRAS or tradition. Then, any alternative can be chosen. To know what is right and what is wrong, we should understand views contained in the scriptures. Lord KRISHNA has said-

ज्ञात्वा शास्त्रविधानोक्तं कर्म कर्तुमिहार्हसि ।

(Here, having known the scriptural injunctions, you shall act.) Even if our Knowledge of SASTRAS is next to nil, we should observe the ways of Great Souls in such cases of our uncertainly and follow them. The UPANISHAD says-

यथा ते तत्र वर्तेरन् । तथा तत्र वर्तेथाः ।

(Just as the Great Ones conduct themselves there. should you act in a similar situation.)

In case of doubts, the GURU should be consulted for clarification. If He is inaccessible, the opinion of the pious and erudite ones should be adhered to. In the case of a doubt demanding immediate clarification added to the non-availability of a knowledgable person for consultation, we should sincerly pray ISHWARA and decide upon that which appeals to our intellect. We should however be cautious to check the mind from leading us along the erroneous path by being influenced by desire.

9. Rebirth

D : The SASTRAS say that rebirth exists. Is there any rational evidence in favour of this ?

A : Yes : there are many logical evidences in favour of rebirth. One person suffers badly in this world while another lives happily. What is the reason for this ? Why do certain people experience sufferings and certain others enjoy pleasures though they are not the fruits of actions of this birth ? We see a similar situation even among young children. In order to account for all these one should accept the existence of rebirth. It is only proper to say that we suffer as a result of sins committed by us in our previous births and enjoy by way of virtuous deeds of our past. Besides, some people exhibit memory of their previous birth. I learnt that scientists are investigating this aspect. Some of those who had recalled experiences of their previous birth had described certain incidents and scenes which have been found to agree with the past. Without a prior experience, how can memory come to exist now ? Hence, there should have been a previous birth where those objects should have been experienced.

Our SASTRAS prescribe certain PRAYASCHITTAS (expiations) to get rid some diseases and further speak of PRAYASCHITTAS for sinful actions done in the previous birth. Cure from diseases on performance of ordained expiatory KARMAS is seen. How can the remedial KARMAS directed to nullify the sins of the previous birth cure diseases in this birth if there were no rebirth at all ? If in the above case, it is said that mere faith cured the disease, it cannot be explained why, when the PRAYASCHITTAS are performed with faith but not in accordance with the prescriptions, may be due to ignorance, they do not yield the desired result, i.e., the diseases are not cured.

Some children exhibit certain skills even at their young age. They could not have acquired all their skill by that young age in this birth itself. The child's parents or grand-parents may not have developped the same art. From this it is clear that there indeed was a previous birth for the child and that those skills had been acquired then.

It we do not accept rebirth, we are forced to the conclusion that ISHWARA is not impartial. 'ISHWARA has kept some people happy and some others unhappy. He has no mercy at all because some are experiencing misery throught their life -nobody associates such attributes with ISHWARA. People would much rather accept the existence of rebirth.

A fresh born baby drinks its mother's milk even before it has been taught by others to do so. This is because of the knowledge that should have been present even before birth to the effect that satisfaction can be obtained from mother's milk. Not even a fool would involve in an action if he does not find utility in it. Therefore, even the child, trying to drink its mother's milk, should have been aware of the satisfaction that it would be deriving therefrom. Such an awareness could not have arisen afresh in this birth, since the child would not have drunk its mother's milk previous to its doing so for the first time in this birth. Therefore, the child should have acquired that knowledge only in the previous birth. This adds to establish the existance of rebirth.

If we do not accept rebirth, it has to be said that man after his death, would always stay in heaven or in hell. Will this be sensible ? Not at all. As a general rule, that which has a beginning must have an end. Therefore, stay in heaven has to have an end since it had a beginning.

Further, consider the case of a baby which has suffered a premature death. It could have acquired neither PUNYA or PAPA. Will the baby be condemned to hell, or will it make its way to heaven ? If its destiny is hell, it has to take up punishment for no fault on its part, as it has not incurred sins. If we accept the other alternative, i.e., heaven, we are led to concede that heavenly pleasures are experienced by the baby even though it has no PUNYA to its credit. If there were a rule that one without PUNYA or PAPA would be in heaven for ever after death, every mother would have done well to kill her baby as soon as it is born ! The non-acceptance of rebirth would lead one to such absurd conclusions.

What I have mentioned hitherto is just a handful of reasons from amongst a host of them which all stand to establish rebirth on a rational foundation.

10. Modifying the Sastras

D : With the passage of time, strict adherence to the scriptural injunctions is becoming difficult. Can the SASTRAS be sightly modified to be in tune with the present-day trends ?

A : We should never be short-sighted in our views. Just because accepting bribe has become a common affair, are we justified in advocating bribery by law. That would only help its intensification. We should therefore not seek after modifying the SASTRAS. Consideration of changes in our ways of living are inherent in our SASTRAS. 'Follow to the utmost extent possible' is what They command. We in our present condition should therefore abide by Them to the maximum extent possible by us.

BHAGAVAN SRI KRISHNA. theSupreme Master has said–

स्वल्पमप्यस्य धर्मस्य त्रायते महतो भयात् ।

(Following this DHARMA even to a small extent will save one from great fear.)

In the light of this, how are we justified in attempting to modify the SASTRAS ?

Further, it should never be said that performance of SANDHYA VANDANAM is impossible.

This apart, one who wishes to bring about a change in SASTRAS should be a Knower of the past, present and future. Without even knowing the mechanism by which KARMAS yield fruits, how can we change the dictates of SASTRAS? We just cannot, and this is because we are incapable of asserting with certainly as follows 'Follow this even if it be difficult now, and you shall derive benefit from it later'. We are unaware of what is in store for the future birth, nor are we aware now of the happenings in the previous birth. Only a SARVAJNA (Omniscient) who is a Knower of the past, present and future can decide what is right and what is not. Since we are not omniscient, we are incompetent to modify the SASTRAS.

D : YAGAS are being performed at several places. Huge expenditure is incurred as a result. Some people raise an objection to this saying that the same money could have been utilised in uplifting the down-trodden instead of wasting in YAGAS. Is this view correct?

A . The expenditure on YAGAS is but an insignificant fraction of what we spend on material pleasures. Afterall, we offer a small quantity of ghee in a YAGA, How at all can one object to this? Furthermore, gratified by the Holy offerings, the Lord by His Grace, showers on us His returns which are many-fold greater than our meagre offering. For instance, pleased by the YAGA, ISHWARA showes sufficient and timely rains on us. It therefore cannot be said that expenditure on YAGAS is a waste. We sow the seeds and reap the crop. As against this, is it sensible to say that sowing seeds is a mere waste and that we could have eaten the seeds themselves instead. Only on sowing the seeds can the crop be raised. So also, our effort in YAGAS yields precious fruits. The SASTRAS do not expect a poor person to perform a YAGA involving huge expenditure. That the Scriptures command us to adhere to DHARMA to the maximum extent possible by us is a pointer to this. The expenses in YAGAS are therefore only for our betterment. It is foolish to look upon these expenses as extravagant.

11. Scriptural Injunctions

D How are we to perform SANDHYA VANDANAM during a train journey? The train may not be proceeding in the same direction.

A: Does not the train halt at stations?

D: Yes. But what if?

A : If it stops for a sufficiant period at a particula station, the SANDHYA VANDANAM can b performed there.

D : What is to be done if the journey is continuous

A : In such a case, without an alternative SANDHYA VANDANAM can be performec mentally.

D : Does this rule hold good even for PUJA ?

A : Yes.

D : Can we do meditation during a journey ?

A : If the mind is adequately under control, meditation can be performed anywhere.

D : Can hotel food be consumed in the course of journey ?

A : There is an intimate relationship between th food consumed and the state of mind. It i therefore better to keep away from holel foo not only during travel but always. One ca sustain on fruits etc., when travelling.

D : On a sojourn at an unfamiliar place, ANUSTHANA as on normal days may be difficul What is to be done then ?

A : In such cases, ANUSTHANA can be carried ou to the extent possible and this is what th scriptures say.

D : Will ACHARYAL kindly enlighten us on the nature of food to be consumed by a spiritual aspirant ?

A : Only SATTVIC food should be taken. SATTVIC food gives peace to the mind and strength to the body. Onion, garlic, coffee, tea, intoxicating drinks and the such should never be consumed. Care should be taken to avoid eating beyond necessity. This does not however mean that we should fast till our energy is sapped out.

Food is to sustain the body in good health. A MUMUKSHU (spiritual aspirant) would do well to refrain from taking dishes merely for taste.

Defective food is of three types. Onion etc., are bad by nature. Presence of hairs. dirt etc., constitutes the second defect. The mental condition of the cook and the butler falls in the third category. Food cooked by a person indulging in sinful activities is not recommendable for a MUMUKSHU. It is best to eat pure food cooked in the prescribed fashion at one's house.

D : Is fasting on certain days a good habit ?

A : Yes. Taking only fruits etc., on certain days like EKADASI is beneficial. By fasting on such occasions, one acquires sound health apart from securing PUNYA.

12. Upanayanam

D : Can UPANAYANAM be performed durin DAKSHINAYANAM ? (DAKSHINAYANAM i the period of southward journey of the Sun.)

A : For BRAHMANAS, UPANAYANAM should no be performed during that period.

D : Frequently, we come across UPANAYANAM being performed to brothers simultaneously To one son, the father gives the UPADESHA while, it is bestowed upon another by a elderly relative. Some people consider thi wrong. What is ACHARYAL's view in thi connection.

A : Simultaneous performance of UPANAYANAM to brothers, one being initiated by the father on the other by another relative is not in accordanc with SASTRAS.

D : When should UPANAYANAM be performed?

A : The boy should be initiated even when he i young. It is said that a BRAHMANA should b invested with the sacred thread at GARBHAS THAMA (the eighth year from the period o pregnancy). However, specific occasions hav been prescribed for better results. If initiate at the age of five, BRAHMAVARCHAS (spiritu splendour) is attained. Postponing the investi ture is certainly not good. However, jus because it is said so, there is no need to think as follow :

'The boy has passed the age specified for UPANAYANAM without being initiated. He need not therefore be invested with the sacred thread henceforth'.

Q : Which is the appropriate time to start the morning SANDHYA VANDANAM ?

A : A short while before sun rise.

Q : Does ACHARYAL advise that one should wake up early in the morning ?

A : Yes. In the morning, the period just before sun rise is most suitable for ANUSTHANA. If ANUSTHANA at this hour is not possible, that is a different matter. Going to bed between ten and eleven at night and waking up between four and quarter-Past-five in the morning is a very good habit.

Q : If due to some reason, the SANDHYA period is past without SANDHYA VANDANAM being performed, can that particular SANDHYA VANDANAM be given up ?

A : Normally, howmuch ever late it may be, SANDHYA VANDANAM should not be neglected. If delayed, it should be performed by offering the PRAYASCHITTA ARGHYA, Just because it is said that it should not be performed even if delayed, it does not mean that it need not be done at the proper time. With effort, one must do it at the proper hour. If it is not possbile to do so, it should be performed as early as possible, but it should on no account be left unperformed.

D : What if one is ill ?

A : If consciousness and control over the mind are prevelent during illness, it can be performed mentally.

D : Should one bathe before SANDHYA VANDANAM in the morning ?

A : Very much. Bath before the morning SANDHYA VANDANAM is compulsory. During illness, at least the MANTRA SNANA should be done. If illness is severe, at least the SANDHYA VANDANAM should be performed mentally.

D : How many times should the GAYATRI MANTRA be chanted ?

A : As many as possible . but there is a lower limit such as a hundred and eight times during morning SANDHYA VANDANAM as specified in the Scriptures. One should not chant fewer times than the above limit. In case of urgency when there is no way out, the consideration is entirely different. Normally, shortening the JAPA to a number less than the specified one is not to be done.

D : Are SAMIDADHANA and BRAHMA YAGNA Included among the NITYA KARMAS of a BRAHMACHARI ?

A : Yes.

D : For having to attend school, college, office etc., it may not be possible to perform MADHYANHIKA at the proper time. How does ACHARYAL consider that this should be done ?

A : The MADHYHANIKA can be performed after the PRATAH SANDHYA VANDANAM itself. This is in case when there is no other option,

13. Fate and Free-will

: Do we have the power to overcome fate ? The reason for my asking this is that on one side, we see in the SASTRA that 'one can conquer fate'. For instance, in YOGA VASISHTHA, it is said-

शुभाशुभाभ्यां मार्गाभ्यां वहन्ती वासना सरित् ।
पौरुषेण प्रयत्नेन योजनीया शुभे पथि ॥

(The river of tendencies leads one through the auspicious and evil paths. By means of effort and manliness, one should go along the auspicious path.)

This shows that free-will is more powerful than fate. On the other hand, we also see–

उपभोगेनैव शाम्यति ।

(PRARABDHA is exhausted only by experiencin
it.) and

यद्भावी न तद्भावी भावी चेन्न तदन्यथा ।

(What is not destined to happen will not happen
what is to happen will not be otherwise.) Wil
ACHARYAL kindly clear my doubt ?

A : First of all, one should know what 'PRARABDHA
is. This should be understood along with it
mechanism of fruition. Those action of th
previous births which yield fruits now indee
constitute the cause of this birth. It is this tha
we call 'PRARABDHA'. PRARABDHA does no
impel one along any good or evil path. KARMA
which have started yeilding fruits lead on
gradually in the following manner. The
generate in the mind tendencies of likes an
dislikes. It is therefore that Lord KRISHNA ha
said-

सदृशं चेष्टते स्वस्याः प्रकृतेर्ज्ञानवानपि ।
प्रकृतिं यान्ति भूतानि निग्रहः किं करिष्यति ॥

(Everyone, even a knower, acts according t
one's nature. Nature compels beings. Wha
can restraint do ?)

During the exposition of this hymn, SHANKAR
Himself raises the following objection-"If ever

one acts being impelled by nature, there is no place for SASTRAS at all. Such being the case, what is the purpose of the saying-'Be righteous', -contained in the SASTRAS ?' After having raised such an objection Himself, He refutes it and quotes the very next SHLOKA as a testimony. There, it is said–

इन्द्रियस्येन्द्रियस्यार्थे रागद्वेषौ व्यवस्थितौ ।
तयोर्न वशमागच्छेत् तौ ह्यस्य परिपन्थिनौ ॥

Thus it is clear that if we conquer like and dislikes, we will no longer be under their sway. So, with the SASTRAS as our basis, if we shed likes and dislikes, we can be independent. You asked whether PRARABDHA (fate) could be overcome. The reply is–'It can positively be overcome'. If it is said that PRARABDHA cannot overcome, man cannot be held responsible for his actions, as in this case, he would not have had an alternative.

I said that the earlier KARMA which yeild fruits now is indeed PRARABDHA. It is merely the effect of our efforts in previous births. Hence, PRARABDHA can never be stronger than effort. We can change the tendency created by our earlier actions by another effort in this birth. However, if the tendency caused by the KARMA of our previous birth is very strong, to change it, we have to put in a stronger effort. This is true in most of the cases. An illustration to this is a cow tethered to a post. It can roa about freely only to the extent of the lengt of the rope ; it cannot go beyond. Similarly the fate of the country, the free-will of othe people and our actions place a limit to ou freedom.

A person may board a train but the train ma meet with an accident. In the same way, sometimes, eventhough one might have fared well i examinations, the expected result might no materialise. One should not give place to worr on seeing all these since almost anything ma be attained in spiritual life by effort. One may be destained by PRARABDHA to be a house-holder, but with the blessings of a GURU and by effort, one can lead the life of a BRAHMACHARI and later that of a SANYASIN. Through the consequences of earlier KARMAS have to be experienced, the intensity of PRARABDHA can be decreased by the Grace of ISHWARA, The evil effects of PRARABDHA can also be reduced to a great extent by means of JAPA, HOMA, DHYANA, PUJA and SATSANGA (company of Great Souls),

D : If according to one's horoscope, one should live for eighty years, does it mean that one will not die before that ? Similarly, if another has a very short span of life, will he not live beyond that age ?

A : The reply to your questions is in the negative.

D : Does Your Holiness then mean that the horoscope is read wrongly or that casting of the horoscope itself is wrong ?

A : No,

D : All that is predicted with the horoscope as basis is useless. Further, palmistry is not sensible, Hence, no purposes is served by JYOTISHA SASTRA. Is this then the view of ACHARYAL ?

A : Not at all.

D : Will ACHARYAL kindly explain ?

A . The horoscope merely indicates the effect of KARMAS that one had done in the previous births. Hence, the effect as predicted by it is a possible result of the KARMA of the previous birth. In this birth, by our actions due to free-will, we can definitely change it. Like MARKANDEYA, if we earn the Grace of the Lord, we can live longer than we are destined to. Similarly, by falling into evil ways, one can spoil one's health and die earlier than one was predestined to. We can see this ourselves without refering to an astrological text. Hence, one can change the course of life depending on one's effort Further, we have also seen the astrologers say-'If one acts as follows, the effect of that KARMA will be reduced.' If the verdict of the horoscope is immutable, what is the use of such expiation ? Hence, it is concluded that by effort, one can get over fate. Nobody need fear on seeing the horoscope. Horoscop is only an indicator of what is to come. But w can certainly alter it,

14. Dharma

D : How is one to decide what is DHARMA an what is ADHARMA ?

A : Any action ordained by the SASTRA is DHARM while that which is prohibited is ADHARMA. I deciding about DHARMA, MANU says-

वेदः स्मृतिः सदाचारः स्वस्य च प्रियमात्मनः ।
एतच्चतुर्विधं प्राहुः साक्षाद्धर्मस्य लक्षणम् ॥

(The VEDA, SMRITHI texts written with the VEDA as their basis, the righteous conduct of the SATPURUSHAS (Great Ones) and the satisfaction of one's conscience–these four are the characteristics of DHARMA.

The VEDA is the foundation of all DHARMA and since the SMRITHI is in consonance with the VEDA, it is also to be taken as PRAMANA (testimony). The traditional ACHARA is also a PRAMANA. Besides all these, the satisfaction of our conscience is a PRAMANA. These help us in deciding what is DHARMA and what is ADHARMA.

D : A particular conduct is DHARMA in one circumstance but ADHARMA in another. How are we to decide in such circumstances ?

A : It is indeed true. Sometimes, a certain action may be DHARMA while on some other occasion the same may become ADHARMA. To decide about all these, we should refer only to SASTRAS. After this consultation, that which appeals to one's intellect as proper should be done. If one who steals from a house is arrested, he might argue–'I stole only from a wealthy man's house. This paltry loss is negligible by his standards, where as, it has given me an opportunity to fill my stomach. Therefore, what is wrong in this stealth ? Will the judge ever accept this ? He will not, because it is contradictory to what is written down in the code of law. Hence, the judge is bound to punish him. So also, what is prescribed as righteous in the VEDA is indeed DHARMA. What is prohibited by it is ADHARMA. We do not have the competency to decide for ourselves because we are not knowledgable to that extent. Since we cannot independently assert-'If we do this, happiness can be obtained in the next birth', or 'his action will cause misery' etc., we cannot come to a firm conclusion.

D : If we make a mistake unknowingly, are we responsible for it ?

A: 'Responsible' in what sense ?

D : Will we accrue sin on that account ?

A : When doing so, if we are unaware that it is wrong, not much sin results. All such mistakes that you commit out of ignorance get destroyed by the SANDHYA VANDANAM that you perform. There is no need for a special PRAYASCHITTA. When there is an opportunity for you to know what is wrong but still you do not make efforts to know, it is improper to rule out sin. You should try to know to a certain extent, what is right and what is wrong. If you commit a mistake without your knowledge, it can be taken that if you pray to ISHWARA, He will forgive you.

D : Will it not be convenient to have a single DHARMA common for all ? Is it necessary to have it as-'This is DHARMA for one, that is DHARMA for another'-and so on ?

A : Yes. If after giving shirts of the same size, one says, 'All of you wear these', is it possible to do so ? Never (Due to variations in physical sizes). Hence, for people of varied competence. different DHARMAS should be prescribed. However, SAMANYA DHARMA is there to be followed by all. There can be differences in the VISESHA DHARMAS. It can be so ordained thus-Certain people should follow VISESHA DHARMA as also SAMANYA DHARMA'. Hence, SAMANYA DHARMA is common to all.

D : What is SAMANYA DHARMA ?

A : Manu himself has clarified this by saying–

अहिंसा सत्यमस्तेयं शौचमिन्द्रियनिग्रहः ।
एतं सामासिकं धर्म चातुर्वर्ण्येऽब्रवीन्मनुः ॥

(The DHARMAS common to all, as declared by MANU, are abstinence from injury, truthfulness, non-stealth, purity and restraint of senses.)

One should not even think of causing misery to another. Even if one just entertains such a thought, it is violation of AHIMSA. It is not as though only physical pain is HIMSA (causing injury). Even if one thinks of harming others it is wrong indeed. Next is truthfulness. That utterance which does not cause misery to others and is also factual is truth. If the fact is so disclosed as to harm others, it cannot conform to the category of truth. Even speech which is pleasant but not factual is not truth. Therefore, truth should do good to others in addition to being factual. Abstaining from pilfering others' belongings is ASTEYA. Refraining from stealing implies that another person's property should not even be desired mentally. 'Whatever is with another person, may that be with him : whatever is with me, may that be with me. If possible, I shall give something to others'–such a mentality should be ours. Even mentally conceiving that something should be stolen is violation of ASTEYA, SOUCHAM is purity. This is of two types. One is bodily purity. Bathing, wearing clean dresses etc., belong to the category of bodily purity. The other is mental purity. Clothing may be clean, but if the inner mind is not pure, true SOUCHAM cannot be realised INDRIYA NIGRAHA comes next. When an object is seen or a sound heard, the mind may be attracted towards it. INDRIYA NIGRAHA is nothing but preventing the senses from going out at external objects. Restraining the INDRIYAS or the senses is indeed INDRIYA NIGRAHA.

The DHARMA mentioned above is common to all. They are not differentiated as being applicable only to certain individuals.

D : Will any fruit result on following this SAMANYA DHARMA ?

A : In he who follows DHARMA, the effect is certain to be seen. Hence, everyone born as a human being should necessarily adhere to DHARMA.

D : We see so many people indulging in ADHARMA but we also see that they are only reaping rich benefits now. The reason for this may be said to be the KARMA of the previous birth. But the present acts of ADHARMA do not seem to yield their fruits at all.

A : It is erroneous to say that an act of ADHARMA does not come to fruition at all. It does yield fruits, but sometime later. ISHWARA has unbounded mercy. He gives an opportunity for one to rectify oneself. Only If one does not change even after that does He punish one. DHARMA or ADHARMA does not yeild fruits immediatety. It is therefore that MANU has said–

नाधर्मश्चरितो लोके सद्यः फलति गौरिव ।
शनैरावर्तमानस्तु कर्तुर्मूलानि कृन्तति ॥

[The ADHARMA that is done does not immediately yield fruit unlike a cow (which is ready for milking) ; but like seeds sown in field, it yields fruit gradually and destroys completely the doer of ADHARMA]

You doubted if there was any effect of ADHARMA, but those who had written our SMRITI texts themselves have given a solution to this. MANU has said–

अधर्मेणैधते तावत्ततो भद्राणि पश्यति ।
ततः सपत्नाञ्जयति समूलस्तु विनश्यति ॥

(One apparently flourishes by ADHARMA such as treachery etc., then perceives prosperity by acquiring lot of wealth and then conquers foes. Finally, however, one is completely destroyed.)

D : If it is very difficult to adhere to DHARMA, what is to be done ?

A : However great the inconvenience may be, one should not allow one's mind to drift towards ADHARMA. At least by effort. DHARMA should be followed, as DHARMA will give us benefits by yielding its fruits now or later. After death, our relatives go away discarding our body behind. Only DHARMA and ADHARMA accompany us even after death. So also, only DHARMA can save us in the other world and also in the next birth. Never will he who protects DHARMA be left helpless. That is why it is said-

धर्मो रक्षति रक्षितः

(DHARMA protects one who protects DHARMA)

This is very much true. Even if the result is not perceived now, the effect will definitely be experienced. Further, it is our duty to act according to DHARMA. 'Has ISHWARA not provided me with all sorts of comforts and benefits ? Did He not save me while I was helpless in my mother's womb ? should I not be grateful to Him ?'–considering thus, one should act according to the injunctions of the VEDA. That indeed is DHARMA. One should adhere to DHARMA at least with this perspective.

D : Much wealth is required to perform YAGAS etc. So, does it mean that there is not much scope for a poor man to follow DHARMA ?

A : No. In the SASTRAS it has been said that one should follow DHARMA to the extent of one's capacity. In following DHARMA, he who is wealthy can construct a temple. If a man does not have wealth, he can go to the temple constructed by the affluent, offer his obeisance and thereby, acquire merit. Hence, there is equal scope for both classes of people to adhere to DHARMA. The difference lies only in the particulars of DHARMA to be followed. If he who is poor donates a rupee for a noble cause, he acquires high merit: but if a wealthy person having lakhs of rupees donates a rupee or a half, he will not get the benefit to the same extent as the poorman did.

D : We see certain people who stick to their ANUSHTHANA etc., but cause sufferings to others. Is such a conduct DHARMA ?

A : Not at all. By doing so. they pretend to follow DHARMA. The SASTRAS themselves say–

श्लोकार्धेन प्रवक्ष्यामि यदुक्तं ग्रंतकोटिभिः ।
परोपकारः पुण्याय पापाय परपीडनम् ॥

(I will make know in half a SLOKA what has been said in crores of texts. Helping others is PUNYA. Troubling others is PAPA'.)

So, if one causes misery to others, it certainly leads one to sin. however, if one abstains from DHARMA thinking that others cannot withstand oneself adhering to DHARMA and that others would be happy only if one does not follow DHARMA. It is improper again. This is because, eventhough one may quote the SASTRA as prescribing DHARMA without causing pain to anybody, the word 'anybody' here only means 'any good person'. This however does not imply that others should be put to trouble. ISHWARA PUJA that we do may not be to the liking of an atheist. But on that account, we should not abandon the PUJA. We can just continue with it but refrain from abusing the athiest unnecessarily. This would be proper indeed.

15. Ahimsa

D : AHIMSA has been ordained in the SASTRAS. Should it be followed at all times ?

A : SASTRAS speak of two categories viz., VRATAS and MAHAVRATA. MAHAVRATA is a vow which should be followed always under all circumstances. Mere VRATHA should be followed with considerations of time and circumstantial limitations. A SANYASIN should follow AHIMSA as a MAHAVRATA; for all others, AHIMSA is a VRATA. One who lacks mercy is not a human-being at all. Everyone should have mercy on the distressed.

D : We kill some insects unknowingly. How then can AHIMSA be followed to the fullest extent?

A : The AHIMSA that I mentioned is only with regard to pain caused to others deliberately. Even the thought of harming others is a violation of AHIMSA.

D: Suppose a scorpion or poisonous snake were to approach one to cause harm, should one just be a spectator in the name of AHIMSA ?

A: No ; one can always remove the snake or scorpion away from the body.

D: Will this not violate AHIMSA ?

A: No, because, one only saved oneself, but did not cause injury to the animal without reason.

D: If one is very docile, will not others take advantage of this to cheat one ? Will they not create troubles through various means ?

A: It is not said that one should be too docile. While it is true that a SANYASI should tolerate pains, if a person, involved in wordly life practices forbearance to that extent, he may land up in trouble.

: In that case, if one troubles or irritates us without reason, what should be done to him ?

: You should be completely calm by mind, but may appear externally to object or still further pretend to be angry ; but you should not at all give place to anger in your mind. By what I said, it does not however imply that one should always pretend to be angry. Being patient to the extent possible, you can present an external anger after a certain limit is exceeded. That is all.

(The questions henceforth in this chapter a

from a soldier who had served in the Army.)

D : Will I accrue sin, since I have been responsib for the death of many people ?

A : No.

D : Is killing not prohibited ?

A : Did you kill them due to hatred ?

D : No.

A : You only did your duty and followed the orde given to you. You did that action for the sa of the Nation and not for your sake. Did y not do so ?

D : Yes.

A : That is why I said that you will not incur s If you had killed one out of animosity or f your selfish end, you would certainly have be a sinner However, you stuck to your duty f the sake of the Nation. Lord KRISHNA had to ARJUNA in the BHAGAWADGITA-'For KSHATRIYA, waging a war is an act of virt but not of sin'. You soldiers are indeed in th place of KSHATRIYAS.

16. Desire

D : Many spiritual aspirants make efforts to conquer desires, but the desires keep springing up again and again. What is the reason for this ?

A : To conquer desire, first of all, there should be a firm resolve that desire should be conquered. One may be advised not to sleep after noon. If it does not occur to one that sleeping after noon is wrong, one may not sleep for some days, but later it may occur to one–'What is wrong if I sleep for just this one day ?, Therefore, we should first conquer the desire. Some people may not give place to VIVEKA (discrimination). Still, they may just keep wishing that their desire should vanish. The reason for this is absence of VAIRAGYA (dispassion). VAIRAGYA is absent as VIVEKA that should produce it is absent. Without VIVEKA how indeed will one get VAIRAGYA ? Hence, VIVEKA should always be given its due place in thought, VAIRAGYA develops from VIVEKA and desires subside because of VAIRAGYA. After this, further practices in spiritual life should be faithfully carried out. In the initial stages of spiritual practices, one may not find a taste for them, but if we abandon them on that account, how will the desires subside ? One should always practice KARMA YOGA, MANASIKA PUJA, contemplation on the Lord etc. If DHYANA is also practiced, it is highly laudable. Study SASTRAS is very essential.

D : By following this procedure, desires may no occur temporarily, but suddenly they manifes Is there any reason for this ?

A : I will give you an illustration. Suppose there i a spring, one end of which is fixed to a wall. we keep stretching the other end, the sprin yields and elongates. No sooner do we sto pulling it then it will draw itself. The mind likened to the spring attached to the wor comparable to the wall. Even though the sprin (mind) is stretched (held under restraint) forcibl (by spiritual practices), it will go back to it original position if let free. So, only the mean to destroy desire should be searched for and it i not sufficient if it is controlled only at the tim of impulse. Some do not completely destro desire. If a desire arises, they may control it that instant thinking–'Oh, we should not giv place to desire now'. That particular desire wi then remain in the sub-conscious. It will burs out abruptly sometime later. Hence by understanding the nature of desire and realising th we stand to gain no good from it, the means destroy it should be sought after. By followin this, there is no scope for desire to arise suddenl For him who finds this restraint difficult practice. SATSANGA (company of SATPURUSHAS) is very essential. Desires subside at lea in the presence of the Great Souls. Frequent study of SASTRAS is a very good practice. The SASTRAS say-'There is no pleasure in material objects'. Though we have faith in SASTRAS our faith is not whole-hearted. Hence a wrong notion such as-'What is wrong if done the other way-may occur. Even to get rid of such ideas it is beneficial to study SASTRAS again and again.

17. Conquest of Anger

D : How is anger to be won over ?

A : 'I am in no way profitted by my anger. This person is chiding me. What do I lose by that ? Nothing. Then why I should give place to anger ?'-If one entertains such thoughts, anger will eventually subside.

D : Is mere thinking on the above lines sufficient ?

A : No ; further thought is necessary. 'If now I abuse a person due to my anger, it may seem that I have achieved a great feat. However, in reality, have I not become a slave to my anger ? In attempting to conquer an enemy, I have been conquered by another, Anger only destroys me ; it spoils my intellect ; tempts me into what I should not do. Why should I become a slave to this anger ? Much more benefit and satisfaction will I get by control of anger compared to those accomplished by abusi another person–thus should one think. Ev before anger arises, if one perceives with a litt bit of alertness, the advent of anger can be see If this is fore-seen, effort can be made to contr anger even then. Half the anger will subside t moment such a perspective is held. Howeve many realise their anger only after it has erupte Even such people can develop the habit of sensi it before its eruption by thinking thus–Patien on my part is profitable. That apart, is ang necessary ? Forgiving the other person is li conquering anger itself. That indeed is prope By such mental exercise, anger can be eliminate

D : Will obstacles against spiritual life set in account of anger ?

A : Yes. The Lord in BHAGAVADGITA has indicat desire, anger and greed as the triple gates hell. An angry person will not think of wh he is doing and even takes recourse to dangero steps. He eventually incurs sin. Anger destro him through his sins. Therefore no place shou be given to anger.

D : By 'no place should be given to anger' does mean that one should not raise one's voice oppose others ?

A : Commands should be given wherever the should be, for otherwise, nothing can be carrie out in places like offices. 'Anger should not arise' only means that ideas such as–'I should harm this person or take revenge on him' etc.– should not be given place to. At the outset, calm instructions can be given. If they are not adhered to, one may take recourse to stern language to convey that it should be carried out. However no place should be given in the mind to anger.

18. Hindu Religion

: What does our 'Hindu Religion' mean ?

: The word 'Hindu' in parlance has come to exist because of usage. SANATANA DHARMA is how it is referred to as. We call him a VADIKA who leads his life according to the dictates of of SASTRAS.

: Will ACHARYAL kindly eloborate on who a VEDIKA is ?

: He who follows the VEDIC religion is a VAIDIKA He may follow the time SANKHYA, NAIYAYIKA, VAISESHIKA, MIMAMSA or VEDANTIC school of thought. A person having the VEDA as PRAMANA and intending to follow what is said in it is a VAIDIKA.

. Many people have not studied the VEDA. They do not know what is said therein. That being the case, how can we call them VAIDIKAS ?

A : They might not have studied the VEDA but m still hold VEDIC utterances as PRAMANA.

D : Some might not have heard much about t VEDA. How can we call those also VEDIKAS ?

A : Do they lead their lives according to the dictat of the VEDA or not ?

D : What does that mean ?

A : Do they not follow certain traditions ? How that tradition come into being ? Our fore-fath inculcated them after an analysis of the aspec of DHARMA and ADHARMA. They may following certain regulations such as-'I shou not utter a lie. I should not harm others. should lead my life according to this'. T reason for this is that their parents have train them thus. Their fathers would have be taught by their grandfathers. It has come dow to us traditionally. What has been prescrib in the VEDA is being made known to the though not directly but in an indirect way. Hen they can also be called VAIDIKAS.

D : If a person has no faith at all in the VEDA is a VAIDIKA ?

A : I said that he who has faith in our VEDA is VAIDIKA, If one's fore-fathers had accept the VEDA but one does not, we call hi BRASHTHA (one who has fallen).

D : Some people put certain restrictions such as–only certain people are eligible to make use of wells, tanks, prayer halls etc., meant for public use and that others should not. Many people are put to inconvenience as a result. Is this proper ?

A : No one should restrict use of wells, prayer halls etc., meant for the public by saying that they should be used only by this person or that they should not be used by that person. There is absolutely no fault in punishing those who restrict like this.

D : Some people oppress certain others saying that they are 'low-born'. Does this appear proper to ACHARYAL ?

A : As I have already said, it is against DHARMA to harm another. Each person should follow his DHARMA. Be it SAMANYA DHARMA or VISESHA DHARMA, harming another is equivalent to abandoning one's DHARMA. So, none should cause pain to others. If one does that, it only means that one is transgressing DHARMA.

D : In some places, the government has taken over the temple lands. What should we do for this ?

A : I am not for violent agitations. If we feel that such an action is improper, we can inform the government After all, are not those also in the government human beings ? Why will they not realise if conveyed properly ? If the government takes over the temple lands, it should also see to it that no inconvenience is felt in carrying out the PUJA there On taking over the temple lands, it should take care of such matters. If this is done we have no objection for this decision of the government. If it does not cater to temple needs inspite of taking over the lands, the government is guilty of doing injustice to the temple constructed by devotees. The problem should be set right only by making the government aware of thls matter. If one indulges in violent agitations, not only will others be put to difficulty, but the situation may also worsen instead of the government conceding the demand.

D : Hindus consider cow as a sacred animal. Even then, cow-slaughter continues to take place in the country. Is it proper to agitate against this ?

A : We all accept that cow is a holy animal. Further, we also accept that we derive benefit by practicing AHIMSA. Cow is a docile animal. It provides us with milk. Is not even its excreta useful ? So, protecting such an animal is only advantageous to us. However, to prevent cow-slaughter, if one indulges in violent agitations will everything be set right ? No. Cow-slaughter can come to an end only if each person decides to safeguard the cow which he owns even if it has grown old. If one drives it away because the milking season is over and if has become old, what will be the fate of the cow ? Taking a firm decision to safeguard the cow is much superior to indulging in agitations. We see many people raise slogans calling for cow protection, but all that is only an eye-wash. At the same time, we can also see people who are protecting their cows by erecting cow-sheds etc. Their action goes without publicity. Of these two categories, the latter is superior to the former. Cow-slaughter should essentially be abolished. But we should also take proper care to know the exact procedure to be followed in eliminating cow-slaughter.

D : Hinduism speaks of what everyone should do to oneself. Is this not a self-centered System ? Nothing seems to have been mentioned about doing something for the sake of others. In Christianity, it has been prescribed that one should serve others. What is the opinion of ACHARYAL as regards this ?

A : My opinion is that your view is incorrect. How are we trying to attain MOKSHA ? It can be attained only by one of pure mind. Being merciful is essential to cleanse our mind. Hence if we cultivate mercy, we can purify our mind and as a result, attain good heights in meditation. Does not mercy mean sharing the pains of another person ? It is therefore, a glaring flaw to say that it has not been specified in the

Hindu religion that one should be kind to others Our SASTRA says that we should get rid o AHANKARA (ego) AHANKARA is the notio 'I' in the body and mind. It is only getting ri of AHANKARA that has been specified in a religions. Has it not been? Hence it is foolis to say that Hinduism does not ordain service t others. Even here, due place has been given t kind-heartedness. Further, incarnations of th Lord have been spoken of in Hindu epics. Wh did the Lord incarnate? Was He in need o anything? No. He took the incarnations on for the sake of others. We keep Him as ou ideal. We consider emulating Him as our ai See the BHAGAVADGITA. In the stanza—

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥

it has been said that there should be no hatre towards anybody and that we should be compassionate. Do we not pray—

लोकाः समस्ताः सुखिनो भवन्तु ?

(May everyone be happy). There is no differenc such as-'He is our enemy belonging to a differen religion; he is not to our liking'-etc. It i indeed for the SREYAS of all creatures that w pray.

When sometimes a JNANI does not serv others, it only means that He is fully immerse in the transcendental state. For Him, the world itself is non-existent. He has no binding whatsoever. How ever, JNANIS are usually compassionate. If a JNANI does not offer physical help, He is doing good to the world by His mere presence here. Is only bodily help a form of service ? JNANIS are merely for the benefit of others indeed.

19. Mental Worship

D : Some people desire to perform PUJA but find no suitable opportunity for that. They are unable to meditate properly, What can such aspirants do to have one-pointed concentration of the mind ?

A : They can practice MANASIKA PUJA.

D : What is MANASIKA PUJA ?

A : MANASIKA PUJA is worshipping ISHWARA mentally. Flowers, incense etc., are required for PUJA. Just as we do external PUJA, if we imagine all the accessories, conceive that ISHWARA has come and offer them all to Him mentally, that is indeed MANASIKA PUJA.

D : During MANASIKA PUJA, how should we carry out DHYANA, AVAHANA etc ?

A : 'ISHWARA has come. I should welcome Him. I should offer Him an ASANAM (seat)'-contemplating thus, we offer Him ASANAM. After He adorns the ASANA, we wash His hands and Hi Lotus Feet, and for His ACHAMANA we giv Him pure water. He accepts that. Then w bathe him. Like this we complete the PUJ mentally. We can do this with the feeling tha He accepts all our offerings.

D : What is to be done if ISHWARA's form doe not remain steady during MANASIKA PUJA ?

A : While doing MANASIKA PUJA, one can kee before oneself a picture of one's ISHTA DEVAT The PUJA may be done looking at the pictu with eyes open. In due course PUJA can b continued keeping the eyes close and conceiving that ISHWARA is present there. If this i not possible, once again, PUJA can be continued with eyes open. Here everything is don mentally.

D : Is there any restriction in doing MANASIK PUJA ?

A : There is no restriction in doing MANASIK PUJA. It can be done at any time in any way Charming effects are seen if ISHWARA i worshipped mentally ; the mind becomes purifie and His Grace is obtained. To get an ide about MANASIKA PUJA, STOTRAS like SHIV MANASA PUJA STOTRA or MRUTYUNJAY MANASA PUJA STOTRA may be studied.

D : Are there any restrictions by way of qualification such as 'only such persons should do it' as regards MANASIKA PUJA ?

A : Any one can perform MANASIKA PUJA. There is nothing like-'this person can do ; the other should not.

D : How long should MANASIKA PUJA be done ?

A : It can be done for any length of time. Until this worship comes to practice, it may be a little difficult to sit for a long time. By repeated practice one will find more taste in it.

20. Role of Karma

D : What is the role of KARMA (action) in spiritual life ?

A : If action is done for the sake of ISHWARA without attachment to the fruits of actions, mental purity is attained.

D : Does it imply that one will not perform actions properly if one has no attachment to its results ?

A : No.

A : But it is not logical ? Does it not mean that one will not perform actions to the extent one is capable of when one is not interested in success or failure ?

D : Only the opposite of this is true. One who does not heve attachment at all will perform actions properly, as one does that deed as an offering to the Lord. Would any devotee like to offer a thing which is not good to the Lord? He will not. One who practices KARMA YOGA will not indulge in a bad deed. Further, such a one will offer all actions to the Lord. Owing to devotion in Him, one will do all actions perfectly. As against this, one who has attachment to fruits of actions cannot perform with this perfection.

D : Has this been spoken of in SASTRA also ?

A : Yes, Lord Krishna says–

मुक्तसङ्गोऽनहंवादी धृत्युत्साहसमन्वितः ।
सिद्ध्यसिद्ध्योर्निर्विकारः वर्ता सात्विक उच्यते ॥

(One who is Without attachment, without ego endowed with firmness and enthusiasm, equipoised in success and failure-such a one is termed as SATTVIC doer.)

From this it is obvious that those who do not perform actions properly have not been referred to above.

D : Suppose one acts with an idea that by dedicating to ISHWARA, they will all be successful, will it not mean that one has followed KARMA YOGA?

A : No ; as that person has not renounced the attachment for the fruit of action.

D : What makes following KARMA YOGA difficult ?

A : Attachment to objects and lack devotion towards ISHWARA-these two make practice of KARMA YOGA difficult. One having attachment may say that one had dedicated the fruit but actually, would have had the desire for the fruit. In the absence of staunch devotion to the Lord, the idea 'Everything should be dedicated ; it is my duty to do so' etc. will not find place. This again makes whole-hearted practice of KARMA YOGA Impossible.

D : Is it enough if one is unattached to the results or should everything be positively dedicated to the Lord ?

A : If it is to be KARMA YOGA, one must dedicate everything to Him,

D : Will ACHARYAL kindly give an illustration showing that one practicing KARMA YOGA will perform one's duty in a befitting manner ?

A : Let us suppose that a student takes an examination. He would be very much attached to it mentally. If he does not fare well in a particular subject what will happen ? He gets worried and on that account will not perform to the desired mark even in the next days, examination. This is because of the repeated worry that he had not fared well in the previous examination. The result is that he will not fare well the next da also. He who is unattached after dedicatin the result to ISHWARA prepares whole-hearte dly. Such a student will prepare well for bot the examinations. As he reads without worr he will be better involved in the action. Further, person may not perform his actions due to lac of interest ; but he who practices KARMA YOG will concentrate on his job with the idea–'I d this for the sake of ISHWARA. Therefore at lea considering it as my duty, I should do well'.

D : Who is competent to practice KARMA YOGA

A : Anybody can practice KARMA YOGA. practice of KARMA YOGA, mind becomes ve pure; furthermore, devotion towards ISHWAR deepens. Realisation will dawn only on a pu mind. Hence everyone should follow KARM YOGA always. Everybody can derive bene from this.

D : Is it sufficient to dedicate merely the fruits actions to ISHWARA or should one dedica the actions themselves ?

A : It is extremely good to dedicate the action itse If that is not possible, at least the resu should be dedicated. In BHAGAVADGITA, Lo KRISHNA has said-

मय्येव मन आधत्स्व मयि बुद्धिं निवेशय ।
निवसिष्यसि मय्येव अत ऊर्ध्वं न संशयः ॥

(Keep your mind in Me; keep your intellect in Me ; you shall dwell in Me alone. There need not be any doubt about this).

अथ चित्तं समाधातुं न शक्नोषि मयि स्थिरम् ।
अभ्यासयोगेन ततो मामिच्छाप्तुं धनञ्जय ॥

(If you are incapable of fixing your mind firmly on Me, endeavour to reach Me by repeated practice).

अभ्यासेऽप्यसमर्थोऽसि मत्कर्मपरमो भव ।
मदर्थमपि कर्माणि कुर्वन्सिद्धिमवाप्स्यसि ॥

(If you are not capable even of repeated practice, perform actions for my sake. Even by performing actions for my sake you shall attain SIDDHI)

अथैतदप्यशक्नोषि कर्तुं मद्योगमाश्रितः ।
सर्वकर्मफलत्यागं ततः कुरु यतात्मवान् ॥

(If you are incompetent to do even this seeking refuge in Me alone dedicate the fruits of all actions to Me, with a disciplined mind).

D : If one is engaged in KARMA YOGA, will one perform many actions ?

A : One need not. Actions may be classified into six categories. They are-(1) NITYA KARMA, (2) NAIMITTIKA KARMA, (3) KAMYA KARMA (4) NISHIDDHA KARMA, (5) UPASANA KARMA

(6) PRAYASCHITTA KARMA. NITYA KARMA is that which has to be done every day at the proper time. SANDHYA VANDANA is an illustration for this. NAIMITTIKA KARMA is not governed by a definite time restriction. Some of the KARMAS to be done during eclipses can be cited as an illustration for this. Unlike this, the hour for SANDHYA VANDANA which is during the SANDHYA period is prefixed and is regular. KARMA which one does with a desire for some achievement is called KAMYA KARMA. The SASTRAS do not ordain these as obligatory duties. One does these only because of one's desire. NISHIDDHA KARMA is that which SASTRAS prohibit. KARMAS connected with UPASANA belong to the category of UPASANA KARMA. Finally, that action by which sin is expiated is PRAYASCHITTA KARMA. These six types can be simplified by considering only four categories as NITYA, NAIMITTIKA, KAMYA and NISHIDDHA KARMAS. One should not indulge in NISHIDDHA KARMA. KAMYA KARMA should be renounced as far as possible. However one must abide by NITYA and NAIMITTIKA KARMAS. So if one practices KARMA YOGA, it does not mean that one gets involved in all sorts of actions. Whichever act is necessary, one does without attachment. That indeed is the essence.

D : One dedicates the actions to ISHWARA to obtain His Grace. In such a situation, how can it be said that one does not have attachment to the Grace of ISHWARA ? Does one not perform actions with the target of securing it ?

A : From one view point what you say is correct. However, rather than being attached to material benefits. If one is attached to ISHWARA, no bondage will be produced. Also, even one's attachment to ISHWARA will free one from bondage. However, ideal KARMA YOGA is followed without even the desire for the Grace of ISHWARA ; but with the idea, 'It is my duty to offer this to ISHWARA. It is therefore that SHANKARABHAGAVATPADAL says in the GITA BHASHYA that one should perform actions with the mentality ईश्वरार्थं करिष्ये (I do for the sake of ISHWARA) and not even with ईश्वरप्रीत्यर्थं करिष्ये (I do to please ISHWARA). In KARMAS like SANDHYA VANDANA we say परमेश्वरप्रीत्यर्थं करिष्ये but it cannot be said that it is wrong to say so, as here too, we can do with the idea-'I do for the sake of ISHWARA'. That apart, this has come by tradition. So the ideal KARMA YOGA should be to do just for the sake of ISHWARA and not even to please Him.

D : In practicing KARMA YOGA, how can one ascertain whether one has made progress or not?

A : I said that there should be no attachment to the fruit of action. Is one unattached when one desires to know whether or not one has made progress in the path of KARMA YOGA ? Ho ever, if one has a doubt about one's progres in spiritual path, if one is practicing KARM YOGA properly etc.. one can look back on one self thus-'Is my mind pure ? Am I peaceful ; a I carrying out all actions without any worry ar for the sake of ISHWARA ?' This itself w show whether one is following KARMA YOG properly or not.

21. Devotio

D : Performing BHAJANS is considered an act devotion by some people. Some others cla performance of NITYA KARMAS to be keeping with devotion. Which of those is tr devotion ?

A : ADI SHANKARA BHAGAVATPADA in VIVEK CHOODAMANI has said–

मोक्षकारणसामग्र्यां भक्तिरेव गरीयसी ।

(Amongst the means to attaining liberatio devotion reigns supreme),

He Himself has also defined what devotion is. H has said that devotion is abiding in one's ow true nature. That is to say, devotion is mergin with the true nature of the self. This indeed is th definition of ideal devotion. However no all can follow this path of ideal devotion. Tha should be prescribed devotion of a somewh inferior cadre. MADHUSUDANA SARASWATI, in speaking of devotion, has said that devotion is of three kinds. The first kind is having the conception-'I belong to ISHWARA" The second is having the notion-'ISHWARA belongs to me'. An illustration to this is YASHODA'S devotion. If great affection in ISHWARA is cultivated, the idea-'ISHWARA belongs to me'-can develop. Superior to even this is the knowledge-' I am that supreme Being'.

D : How can 'I am that supreme Being' be termed BHAKTI ?

A : An ordinary devotee is prepared to accept that he is different from ISHWARA, but an ideal devotee, being unable to bear even this separation, desires 'I myself will become That Supreme Being' and indeed does attain that realisation. So this should be termed as the highest form of devotion. Such a devotee alone SRI KRISHNA terms as supreme devotee, because He accepts none other than a JNANI as the greatest devotee.

D : What form of devotion should ordinary people have ?

A : As long feeling 'I am the body' exists, it is best to consider oneself as a servant of the Lord. Then, one will not desire anything from ISHWARA. One will consider serving the Lord alone as one's duty. When the Lord said to

PRAHLADA 'I shall bestow a boon upon you,' PRAHLADA replied.

यस्त आशिष आशास्ते न स भृत्यः स वै वणिक् ।

(He who expects somthing from ISHWARA is not a servant ; he indeed is a merchant).

The supreme devotee will not desire anything from ISHWARA. He will be devoted to Him with the conception that being devoted to Him is his duty.

D : If that is so, is it erroneous to consider performance of BHAJANS as devotion ?

A : No ; It is not. Even that is an act of devotion Sage NARADA while speaking on devotion has said–

सा त्वस्मिन्परमप्रेमरूपा ।

(Devotion is of the nature of supreme Love for ISHWARA). Any form of love had in ISHWARA will be grouped under devotion. SRI SHANKARA BHAGAVATPADA has said in SHIVANANDA LAHARI-

अङ्कोलं निजबीजसन्ततिरयस्कान्तोपलं सूचिका
साध्वी नैजविभुं लता क्षितिरुहं सिन्धुः
सरिद्वल्लभम्
प्राप्नोतीह यथा तथा पशुपतेः पादारविन्दद्वयं
चेतोवृत्तिरुपेत्य तिष्ठति सदा सा
भक्तिरित्युच्यते ।

(Just as the seed of an ANKOLA tree seeks that tree, just as an iron piece seeks a magnet, just as a chaste woman has affection for her husband just as a creeper spreads over a tree, just as a river merges with the ocean-if in this fashion the mental thoughts are ever fixed on the dual Lotus Feet of ISHWARA, that is referred to as BHAKTI). The example cited is of the seed of the ANKOLA tree seeking the tree itself. The seed gets itself attached to the tree. In the same way. in the initial stages, the Lord will, by providing enough support to the devotee, turn his mind towards Him. The second illustration is अयस्कान्तोपलं सूचिका । In the first instance, the devotee had to do something. But here, his mind goes towards ISHWARA naturally. In the path of devotion also. if one keeps thinking of ISHWARA, with a little practice, one's mind will go after Him by itself ; just as in the example, the magnet attracts the iron piece, here also ISHWARA will attract His devotee by Himself. The third is साध्वी नैजविभुम् । If the mind keeps going by itself to the Lord thoughts become constantly centered around Him. This is similar to a chaste woman thinking of her husband. The fourth kind is लता क्षितिरुहम् । If a creeper entwines a tree the beauty of the tree is enhanced. In the same way, if the devotee exhibits extreme devotion, it enhances the beauty not only of the devotee but also of the Lord. सिन्धुस्सरिद्वल्लभम् refersto supreme devotion. Just as a river on merging with the ocean cannot be identifie

distinctly, in the same way, if one has limitles devotion in ISHWARA one will merge wit ISHWARA Himself. That indeed is suprem devotion. These are different gradations of devotion. Therefore performance of BHAJAN is also an act of devotion.

D : Some people say that it is sufficient if one do BHAJANS and ask as to why NITYA KARMA should be performed. Is their view correct ?

A : No ; it is never correct. Proper performance NITYA KARMA is itself an act of devotion. L us suppose there is a master and that he has servant. If that servant. without discharging th duties assigned to him by his master mere keeps praising him, will the master have a likin towards his servant ? Here, ISHWARA is inde our Master. He has specified through VEDA and the SMRITIS how we sould lead our live Discarding that and just by praising Him if on calls oneself a devotee, it is tantamount transgressing His commands under the prete of being a devotee. This is not proper. So on should perfoım the NITYA KARMAS. As supplement to that, one is welcome to d BHAJANS etc.

D : How are we to cultivate devotion towards th Lord ?

A : How does attachment to any object arise in us If we keep dwelling on a particular objec attachment towards it develops. If we repeatedly think of some action as required to be performed attachment arises there. So also, in connection with ISHWARA. If we incessantly think. 'He is Supreme ; there is immense happiness in contemplating on Him' etc., devotion will increase many fold.

D : Why should one be devoted to ISHWARA ?

A : Only due to the Grace of ISHWARA will all prosperity be obtained. Even for securing material benefits one should have devotion to ISHWARA. Though normally this may be spoken of as the reason, it is best to be devoted to ISHWARA considering it just as one's duty. The devotion in ISHWARA should be natural. That indeed is true devotion.

D : It is quite natural that if one has excessive affection towards one's ISHTA DEVATA, one will not have as much attachment to other deities. So can one with a liking only to SHIVA have hatred for VISHNU ?

A : Having hatred is neither good not acceptable to the SASTRAS. The formless ISHWARA assumes a form only to shower His grace on His devotee. ISHWARA by Himself is devoid of form. The Lord manifests Himself in the manner in which His devotee desires to see Him. It is improper to harbour notions of difference such as, SHIVA is different from VISHNU. Even if one is mentally attached to one's ISHTA DEVATA one should not hate other deities.

D : Is there any special significance attached to the path of devotion ?

A : Anybody can follow the path of devotion. There is no restriction at all. Moreover, it can be followed easily. One naturally has something called PREETI (Love). If it is turned towards ISHWARA it becomes devotion. Besides, if one is to attain SIDDHI by the path of JNANA or through DHYANA, one will have to face many difficulties while practicing. Only after having advanced to a certain extent will one enjoy bliss, but not so in the path of devotion. We can experience joy even while following the path of devotion. Even while thinking. 'I am contemplating on my Lord', we can enjoy the bliss. Hence, in the path of devotion there is happiness right from the beginning. Devotion itself is the fruit of devotion. This is another exceptional feature here.

D : Sometimes, while reciting STOTRAS. some mistakes may creep in. The person reciting may not have noticed it. Is this improper ?

A : It is always better to understand the meaning of STOTRAS and then chant. Only then will highly qualified devotion develop. Sometimes even if certain mistake occure without one's knowledge, one is not guilty of the fault as

ISHWARA sees only that which is at the base of the heart. He is not concerned about the external exhibits.

मूर्खो वदति विष्णाय विद्वान्वदति विष्णवे ।
उभयोः सदृशं पुण्यं भावग्राही जनार्दनः ॥

One incapable of precise utterance may say 'VISHNAYA' instead of 'VISHNAVE' as uttered by a learned man. Both secure the same PUNYA as JANARDANA grasps only the inner feeling. NEELAKANTA DIKSHITA has explained this by means of an illustration, We all know that by keeping flower on ISHWARA, we will attain SREYAS ; however, that offering should be done with a devotional attitude. Even MANMATHA wanted to shoot an arrow made of flowers only at ISHWARA ; but he had prepared it to shoot wanting to hinder His penance. The Lord did not give place to it. He reduced him to ashes. The devotee as well as MANMATHA threw flowers at ISHWARA but the devotee had the desired result while the latter had to perish. Hence the importance of the inner attitude.

D : Is it improper to pray ISHWARA for wealth, to perform meritoriously in an examination or for anything else ?

A : I do not say that praying is wrong but that sort of a prayer is not necessary at all. ISHWARA knows everything. He knows to bestow upon us that which is good to us. We need no advise Him to give us this or that. It is best only to tell Him, You do as You wish', However, i due to excessive desire one prays to ISHWARA if cannot be termed wrong. If one acquire KAMADHENU and employs it for ploughing will we justify it? ISHWARA is capable o providing everything. He also knows what i good for us and what is not. He is compassio personified. He is Omniscient. That being th case, would we de well to tell Him. 'You ar in my heart and that is sufficient'' or advis Him, 'Give me this ; give me that', and so on?

D : ISHWARA does not need anything. Still it ha been said that everything should be offered t Him. What is the reason for this ?

A : ISHWARA indeed does not need anything, b is it not our duty to surrender our hearts to Him It certainly is. Therefore we must always off our mind to ISHWARA. That is to say, w should always keep dwelling on ISHWAR The Lord, by saying

मामनुस्मर युध्य च

(Think of Me and wage the war) emphasizes t need to contemplate on ISHWARA at all tim Further we must offer everything to ISHWAR If done so, He will certainly accept our offerin The Lord Himself has said.

पत्रं पुष्पं फलं तोयं यो मे भक्त्या प्रयच्छति ।
तदहं भक्त्युपहृतमश्नामि प्रयतात्मनः ॥

(Whatever you offer Me with devotion-a leaf, flower, fruit or water-that do I accept).

यत्करोषि यदश्नासि यज्जुहोषि ददासि यत् ।
यत्तपस्यसि कौन्तेय तत्कुरुष्व मदर्पणम् ॥

Whatever you do, whatever you eat, whatever you offer in a sacrifice, whatever you donate,, whatever austerity you perform, do all these, O son of Kunti, as an offering unto Me).

D : Sometimes mental worries hinder our mind from being turned towards ISHWARA and divert its attention. What is to be done with regard to such hurdles ?

A : Why should a true devotee worry at all ? travelling in a train, should one keep the luggage on ones head or should one keep it down ? In the former case, we will call one a fool. Whatever goes on in this world happens only as per His Will, Should one not be carefree with the feeling that ISHWARA does anything only for our good ? If we worry for ourselves, is it not tantamount to lack of confidence in the belief-ISHWARA protects us ? He gives us that which is good for us'.

D : Even if this is true, worries sometimes arise on their own accord. Why do they so arise ?

A: That is true indeed. It is merely a pointer to the fact that devotion is not mature enough. One should make efforts to develop that devotion and also to get rid of worries. If by doing thus one rests all responsibilities on ISHWARA Himself, one can live comfortably and be happy too.

22. Study of Sastras

D: Is it necessary for one seeking MOKSHA to study SASTRAS completely?

A: Studying SASTRAS is a necessity to the extent of clearing doubts and securing the knowledge of the Absolute.

D: What are the works that ACHARYAL would recommend for disciple seeking MOKSHA?

A: For a spiritually advanced aspirant. MANDUKYA UPANISHAD alone is sufficient. In studying it GOUDAPADA'S KARIKA and SHANKARA'S BHASHYA thereon may also be studied. As regards MANDUKYA UPANISHAD, it has been said in the MUKTIKOPANISHAD-

माण्डूक्यमेकमेवालं मुमुक्षूणां विमुक्तये ।

(MANDUKYA alone is sufficient to give liberation to a MUMUKSHU). YOGA VASISHTHA is a marvelous text. While MANDUKYA UPANISHAD, being a part of VEDA, can be read only by competent persons, anyone can study YOGA VASISHTHA. There is no rule that it has to be studied only after UPANAYANA. Also, BHAGAVADGITA which flowed from the lips of the Lord Himself may be studied. Works of SHANKARA. VIDYARANYA'S PANCHADASI etc, can be taken up for further studies.

D : Why has study of SASTRAS been prescribed ?

A : To clear the doubts of an aspirant. Doubts may arise if we do not understand the view of SASTRAS properly through discussions with others and by other means. The study of SASTRAS will clear such doubts. A firm faith in the VEDANTIC philosophy will also be established. Only by scriptural studies can there be a firm belief in the truth initiated into by the GURU, as also in the purport of the SASTRAS.

D : Is the study of scriptures necessary for one having firm faith in the utterences of one's GURU, whom one obeys always ?

A : If a disciple has firm a faith, it is not necessary for him to study SASTRAS in order to know the TATTVA.

D : How long should one study SASTRAS ?

A : As long as one is not convinced of truth should one study SASTRAS. Thereafter, one can give it up. It is said-

पलालमिव धान्यार्थी त्यजेत् ग्रन्थमशेषतः ।

(Just as one seeking after grains discards th chaff, so also, beyond a certain stage, one ca totally give up study of SASTRAS).

D : What is the opinion of ACHARYAL as regard the nature or books to be read by those enta gled within the material world?

A : They can recite at least one chapter of BHAG VADGITA every day. In addition, PARAYANA of at least small portions of Sri VIDYARANYA PANCHADASI will be helpful. VISHNU SAH SRANAMA PARAYANAM is a very goo practice : it brings SREYAS.

D : Will ACHARYAL kindly tell some hymns BHAGAVADGITA relished by ACHARYAL?

A :

अद्वेष्टा सर्वभूतानां मैत्रः करुण एव च ।
निर्ममो निरहंकारः समदुःखसुखः क्षमी ॥
सन्तुष्टः सततं योगी यतात्मा दृढनिश्चयः ।
मय्यर्पितमनोबुद्धिर्योमद्भक्तः स मे प्रियः ॥

(He who is free from malice towards all being who is friendly as well as compassionate, wh has no feeling of mine and is free from egois to whom pleasure and pain are alike and wh forgives all, who is ever content and controlled mind, who is endowed with fir conviction, whose mind and intellect are Me–that devotee of Mine is dear to Me).

D . Do not these verses refer to the characteristics of a JNANI ? This being the case, will these verses be useful to a MUMUKSHU ?

A : SHANKARA Himself has clarified that the attributes of a JNANI are the basis for others to attain His state. Also, if all are compassionate having renounced hatred as instructed by the Lord, the whole world will be peaceful.

D : In the BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD, it is seen that even women like GARGI and MAITREYI discuss about BRAHMAN. Does it mean that woman are also competent to study the VEDAS ?

A : No. According to the dictates of SASTRAS, only those who have had UPANAYANA can study the VEDAS. Women do not have UPANAYANA and so, they are not eligible to study VEDA directly. If appears that they too were having YAGNOPAVITA in ancient times, but in the present days, they are not eligible to study VEDAS.

D : The SASTRAS taboo certain actions in the KALI YUGA but they had not been prohibited by the SASTRAS in the KRITA and other YUGAS. What is the reason for this ?

A : The SASTRAS say so, and that is all. Through we are capable of giving the purport of what has been said in the SASTRAS, we have neither the authority nor the competence to change what they say or to give reasons for all that has been said therein. As I am in this PEETHA I am to a certain extent in the position of a judge. A judge can give his judgement only as per the laws existing in the world He cannot make a law of his own. Similarly. I did not make afresh any scriptural law. I can only tel you what They mean. No purpose is served by asking Me why it is so. Only the authors of SMRITI texts should be consulted.

D : Can those without UPANAYANA read translations of UPANISHAD ?

A : Yes ; nothing seems to be faulty about it.

D : Can YOGA VASISHTHA, PURANAS, RAMAYANA and such other works be read by all ?

A : All can read them and be benefitted thereby. The VEDAS can be learnt only after UPANAYANA.

D : As some people are not brahmins, they do not have the opportunity to attain MOKSHA. Some raise an objection to this effect. Are they justified ?

A : Who ever said that only he with UPANAYANA can get-GNANA ? VIDURA was a great soul. He was not a DWIJA (twice-born, i. e., UPANAYANA is considered as the second birth). That VEDA should not be studied does not mean that one cannot follow the path to MOKSHA

We can find the essence of UPANISHADS in texts like YOGA VASISHTHA and VICHARA SAGARA. All can study such works and certainly acquire JNANA. Every one is competent to get JNANA. SHANKARA BHAGAVATPADAL has said this conclusively.

23. Vedas

D : It is said that VEDAS are beginningless. Are they ?

A : Yes ; They are like the breath of the Supreme Being.

D : Some people say that the VEDAS were written by the ARYANS thousands of years ago and that the UPANISHADS were written later. Is there any flaw in accepting this view ?

A : This view is not acceptable to us. If the UPANISHADS were written after the VEDAS were, why should the TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD now be considered as constituting the seventh, eighth and nineth PRASNAS of the YAJUR VEDA ARANYAKA at all places ? If it is accepted that TAITTIRIYA UPANISHAD was written at a particular place and after the VEDAS were written, why should all [people consider it as part and parcel of the VEDA ? Further, why should they accept it as belonging to that very position Which it is assigned ?

Let us suppose that VEDAS were written ma years ago. Were the 'authors of VEDAS' sincer or were they intent only on cheating others VEDAS speak about sacrifices that should b performed to attain heaven. We can get th knowledge only from SASTRAS, So, if VED authors were sincere, they could not ha written on their own about sacrifices to atta heaven. If they were to write about them, should have been made know to them earlie If they had been disloyal, why should the themselves have performed these sacrifices these years ?

Traditionally, those who teach VEDAS are ve particular that no mispronounciation shou occur in the words or intonations when recitin VEDAS. Why are they so perticular ? Mere because, those who had taught them the VEDA had instructed them that exact words and the intonations were absolutely necessary, as als that any error would not bring benefit. Proceeding likewise from the studednt to his GUR and further to his GURU's GURU and so down to the so called authors of the VEDAS it will be seen that they too should have ha this belief (that the intonations were ver important). Why did the so called VEDIC author prescribe them that intonations should be maintained inspite of the fact that it is much easie to learn VEDAS without intonations ? Is it no because of their having known that VEDAS ar

Holy and that no error should creep into them ? they could not have considered the VEDAS written by themselves as very Holy. Therefore, no human being could have written the VEDAS,

Many people accept that RAMAYANA was written many years ago. We find that RAMA knew VEDAS. We also come to know that RAVANA who ruled over LANKA also knew VEDAS How could the VEDAS have spread so widely even at that ancient age ? It takes many years even to learn a portion of the VEDAS. In the days of yore, VEDAS were studied without the aid of books. They could have spread over vast regions and the recitation could have descended in the very same precise manner if and only if studied by all in the same fashion with the conviction that they were holy. It has been said that RAMA performed SANDHYA VANDANA. We find that RAVANA too did SANDHYA VANDANA. Therefore, it is seen that same common MANTRAS were recited in BHARATA as Well as in RAVANA's empire. We can see that KRISHNA YAJUR VEDA is one and the same right from KANYAKUMARI to KASHMIR. With the passage of these many years, should any change have occured or not ? However, no change has occured. What is the reason ? The GURU and the SISHYA had both learnt Without even a slight modification, That indeed is the reason. Some people say that VEDAS were written by man many years ago.

We would like to pose this query before them. If the VEDAS were written by man how is i that they are so powerful and strong? Man diseases found incurable even by doctors ar seen to be curred by means of the VEDIC MANTRAS. Many people have witnessed suc incidents. If the VEDAS were merely ordinar books written in olden times, They could no have had such a potency. Hence we conside VEDAS only as direct teachings of the Suprem Being.

D : If so, how can it be said that there are differen RISHIS associated with various MANTRAS? this question arises because, if only the RISHIS had written those MANTRAS can they becom the authors of those MANTRAS. Is this not th situation?

A : RISHIS are not the authors of MANTRAS with which their names are associated. Sages acquired the realisation of the essence of the MANTRAS and brought them to light. They did not create MANTRAS on their own. BRAHMA taught VEDAS simultaneous with His creation of man. With the passage of time, certain MANTRAS have slipped out of practice becaus of break in tradition. VEDA VYASA taught the people once again in the same original form as He Himself is the Lord incarnate. That is all about this.

D : We find many stories in the VEDAS. Are they connected with episodes that actually took place ?

A : No ; they do not pertain to incidents that did take place. VEDA which is like the breath of the supreme Being has no beginning. Therefore, there is no possibility at all for mention of actual incidents in the VEDA. In the BRIHADARANYAKA UPANISHAD is contained a discussion between sage YAAJNAVALKAYA and JANAKA. This is not a narration connected with individuals who might have lived in a certain period. An incident similar to it might have occured in reality but it cannot be said that this alone has been mentioned in the UPANISHAD. The stories in the VEDAS are meant only to illustrate certain aspects

D : 'In the early days of the universe, man might have lived in caves. Sometime later, his intellect could have evolved. Thereafter, the Lord could have taught him the VEDA'. Is there any flaw in having a concept like this ? If we have it this way, we need not contradict the stance of science, and at the same time, we can have it that the VEDA was taught by ISHWARA. What does ACHARYAL have to say about this ?

A : This is faulty, because simultaneous with His creation of man, the Lord should have taught him the VEDA, In BHAGAVADGITA, SRI KRISHNA says—

सहयज्ञाः प्रजाः सृष्ट्वा पुरोवाच प्रजापति : ।

(At the outset having created mankind along with YAJNAS, the creator said ..) 'YAJNA' is the YAJNA mentioned in the VEDA. For YAJNA to be performed VEDA should have existed before that. So we learn that ISHWARA also taught the VEDA when He created the world. If we do not accept this view, we cannot afford a reply to any query. We call that which has been said in the VEDA as DHARMA. What would the primitive man have had as DHARMA and ADHARMA if he had existed before the VEDA? He would not have been aware of DHARMA and ADHARMA. In other words. whatever was done then should have yielded either only pleasant or only painful fruits. If the statement that all his actions yielded only good results is analysed, we are forced to the following conclusion– 'Before the VEDA came into being, good furits were obtained for whatever one did : but after VEDA came to light. one could also have reaped unpleasant fruits for one's actions'. Is this fair? Further, can one accept the conclusion that before VEDA was created, one did not have to go to hell at all as one always secured only good results, whereas after the revelation of VEDA, the possibility of one going to hell arose ?

If the view that all actions led to bad consequences is accepted, it is not fair again. Therefore when Lord created the world, He should simultaneously have taught the VEDA also. That is to say. there should have been some means to learn about DHARMA and ADHARMA. We find these aspects in the VEDA alone. Hence it is not at all proper to say that VEDA was created only after fhe creation of mankind.

D : Is it the command of the SASTRA that VEDA should be studied ?

A : Yes, The competent ones must carry out VEDA ADHYAYANA.

स्वाध्यायोऽध्येतव्यः

(One's SHAKA (portion) of the VEDA should be studied) is the dictate of the VEDA. VEDA should be learnt only from a GURU. If one attempts to learnt from a recorded tape, it can never be VEDA ADHYAYANA. If a parrot calls a person, will he go responding to the call ? If another person calls him with the very same words he is sure to go. The difference lies not in the words but only in the one uttering them. In the same way, VEDA ADHYAYANA is characterised by the SISHYA listening to his GURU reciting the VEDA and repeating the same. It is not learning with the aid of recorded sound. That which is learnt with the aid of recorded tape is never VEDA learnt traditonally.

D : Is VEDA ADHYANA beneficial in any way ?

A : Yes ; many good results are produced. As VEDA ADHYAYANA is the duty of those competent for it, they can discharge their duty by doing it. Further the means for attaining SREYAS both in this world and the next has been spoken of in VEDA. VEDA ADHYAYANA therefare shows us the path to higher good. It is only in the VEDA that the precise way to attain MOKSHA has been shown. Be it material prosperity, SWARGA or MOKSHA that we are after, we should turn our attention only to the VEDA. Even by merely reciting VEDA MANTRAS we do attain merit, and as a consequence, the higher good above all, VEDIC MANTRAS have enormous power. Some of the MANTRAS are capable of curing diseases, bringing rains etc.

D : Nowadays, many people have not learnt the VEDA as they do not get the proper opportunity. Since they have to attend offices, school etc. they do not find time suitably. Even the PUROHITS are not sincere at ADHYAPANA. Under such circumstances, what should one eligible to study the VEDA do ?

A : ADHYAYANA should be done to the extent possible ; at least, RUDRAM, CHAMAKAM, SUKTAS end other MANTRAS essential for PUJA etc., should be learnt. It is not difficult to spare some time in the morning or evening for learning VEDA. It is best if everyone learns one's SHAKA completely. If that is not possible ADHYAYANA should be carried out at least to the extent possible. It is improper to blame only the PUROHITS. They also have to look after their living. This is the age when everyone thinks that secular education alone is the means to earn huge sums of money. Is it not natural for the one teaching the VEDA to wish for oneself a comfortable living ? We therefore do not have enough grounds to deem it wrong if they too want to lead a prosperous life. However, any greed on their part is wrong indeed. We certainly have to provide support to the PUROHITS. If we ourselves do not assist them financially and encourage them, how at all will they be inclined towards VEDA ADHYAYANA ? We should therefore duly respect them and provide them support. From their perspective, they should promote VEDA ADHYAYANA without giving place to ego or greed.

24. Japa

D : Should one performing a MANTRA JAPA know the CHHANDAS, DEVATA etc, of the MANTRA ?

A ; Yes.

D : Should ane do the NYASAS before and after the JAPA ?

A : Yes ; one should.

D : Is it proper to meditate *only* on the form as depicted in the DHYANA SLOKA ?

A : Yes ; that is the normal procedure. However, if the GURU gives the UPADESA with an instruction that it be performed in some other way, that instruction should be carried out.

D : Is there any restriction in doing JAPA mentally ?

A : No.

D . How many times should the JAPA be done ?

A : JAPA brings good to us to the extent we do it. If we get accustomed to it by practice, if effortlessly continues even without our being aware of it. This may later spill out even into the dream state.

D : When performing GAYATHRI JAPA mentally, is it necessary to pay attention to SWARAS (intonations) of that MANTRA ?

A : SWARAS need attention if JAPA is performed with lips moving ; but if GAYATRI MANTRA is chanted mentally with one—pointed concentration, that degree of importance need not be given to SWARAS. If done mentally, it is sufficient to do just the JAPA.

D : Will performance of the JAPA even without concentration yield fruits ?

A : JAPA always yields results ; it produces better effects only if done with the mind one-pointed. Otherwise, the effect will just be meagre.

D : Should VEDA be necessarily chanted with proper SWARAS ? Will sin accrue from mispronunciations ?

A : Yes, We should chant with exact SWARAS.

D : Can one learn VEDA MANTRAS by oneself ?

A : No. The VEDA MANTRAS should be learnt through a GURU, only after He teaches them. It is therefore that KUMARILA BHATTA said—

वेदस्याध्ययनं सर्वं गुर्वध्ययनपूर्वकम् ।

(All study of VEDA should be preceeded by learning from a GURU).

D : What purpose is served by exact chanting of VEDA MANTRAS ?

A : Our mind becomes pure and sins get washed away.

D : According to tradition, UPANISHADS are integral with VEDAS. But SWARAS to many UPANISHADS are not to be seen in tradition. What should be done under such circumstances?

A : SWARAS should have been present even in those UPANISHADS once, as they are parts of the VEDA. However, with the passage of time, SWARA restrictions have gone.

A : Then how should one chant such UPANISHADS?

D : There is no necessity to observe SWARA restrictions in chanting those UPANISHADS for which tradition has lost SWARA. No sin will accrue on that account.

D : What according to ACHARAL are the VEDA MANTRAS to be learnt by all competent persons ?

A : All eligible persons should difinitely learn RUDRAM, CHAMAKAM and SUKTAS as they are chanted during PUJA.

D : In some portions of RUDRAM there are prayers for material benefits. Similar is the case in CHAMAKAM too.

A ; So what ?

D : Can a MUMUKSHU who desires MOKSHA alone chant those mantras though not interested in the material benefits ?

A : The SASTRAS say that even SANYASIS can chant RUDRAM. It is well known that SANYASIS should not desire material objects.

D : If that is the case how can they chant RUDRAM?

A : Whenever one chants VEDA MANTRAS, it does not mean that one then desires the objects mentioned there. MANTRAS such as RUDRAM are very sacred.

If only they are chanted with SWARAS will the Grace of ISHWARA be obtained and purity of mind. Hence eventhough the VEDA MANTRAS contain prayers for objects, if the mind does not go after them, there is no rule that the fruits mentioned in RUDRAM will be positively obtained.

D : Have some portion of VEDA slipped out of tradition in the process of handing over from GURU to SISHYA ?

A : Yes ; we say that there were many SHAKAS (portions) in the YAJUR VEDA, but not as many are available now.

D : It is said that SASTRAS should not be studied during ANADHYAYANA. Is this the opinion of ACHARYAL also ?

A : Yes ; traditional classes should not be conducted on days considerd as ANADHYAYANA.

D : Does it then mean that on such days, one should neither chant those portions of the VEDAS already learnt nor read the scriptural texts by oneself ?

A : No ; it does not. I only say that no traditional classes should be held. Such classes should not be held particularly on PRATHAMA (the day after full moon and new-moon).

25. Brahmacharya

D ; Is it necessary for one desiring only MOKSHA to be a BRAHMACHARYA life-long ?

A : For him who has VAIRAGYA and is after MOKSHA alone, BRAHMACHARYA is very much necessary. In fact, married life is a big bondage. He who wishes to lead the life of a BHAHMACHARI can devote his intellect fully to realise the Supreme Being. This path is slightly difficult for the GRIHASTHAS (householders) who lead a life contrary to the above as they have many responsibilities. Further, such a life itself will do harm by not allowing one to perform ANUSHTHANA (austerities).

D : If such is the case, why did the SASTRAS permi married life ?

A : Not all people desire MOKSHA. Further, only a handful of persons are competent to follow BRAHMACHARYA throughout their life. Therefore, to enable the others also to attain the supreme by leading a good life as also to enable them to strive for MOKSHA, the SASTRAS speak of the householder's life. There too, many regulations are set by SASTRAS. So we should remember that SASTRAS have permitted only a regulated GRIHASTHASRAMA.

D : It has been mentioned in many places in SASTRAS that PRAJA, or progeny, is necessary for a person. Will ACHARYAL kindly give reason for this ?

A : One studying the SASTRAS can realise that such statements are meant only for people other than those who have intense desire for MOKSHA alone and whose mind is free from lust. We can know from SASTRAS that a person with intense VAIRAGYA need not lead a married life. we can also find in the UPANISHADS statements such as—

यदहरेव विरजेत् तदहरेव प्रव्रजेत्

(On the very day one gets intense VAIRAGYA one should renounce).

ब्रह्मचर्यादेव प्रव्रजेत् गृहद्वा वनाद्वा

(Let him take to SANYASA from BRAHMACHARYA, GARHASTHYA or VANAPRASTHA) and

कि प्रजया करिष्यामः ।

(What will we do with progeny ?)

D: Some people raise objections asking as to how society can function if all take up BRAHMACHARYA. What is the opinion of ACHARYAL regarding this ?

A: From among a thousand, one person desires intensely for MOKSHA. Even among those striving for it, only a few feel that BRAHMACHARYA should be followed. Hence there is no place at all for your question here

D: Can even a non-brahmin take up life-long BRAHMACHARYA ?

A: Certainly ; what is the doubt here ?

D: Does your Holiness consider it wrong if women seeking MOKSHA alone remain as spinsters ?

A : Women can also remain unmarried, provided they have intense VAIRAGYA. Here two things must be noted. First, their mind control and secondly, taking care to see that the circumstances are alright.

D : Does ACHARYAL opine that a householder cannot get JNANA or attain MOKSHA ?

A : Not at all. They can definitely attain MOKSHA. However, their path is more arduous. One desiring MOKSHA alone can accept SANYASA and lead a life just for that purpose, but for a householder, such a task is difficult. Nevertheless, it is improper to say that they cannot secure JNANA. JANAKA and such others were JNANIS eventhough they were householders. But it is wrong to quote this and to say that life of a BRAHMACHARIN is not a necessity for anyone.

D : We read about RISHIS in the ITIHASAS and PURANAS. We also learn that they were householders. Does it not mean that even among the householders there were many JNANIS ?

A . It cannot be said that the word 'RISHI' refers to a JNANI. We cannot also assert that all the RISHIS that we learn about were JNANIS. A question remains to be answered here. Did those RISHIS get ATMA JNANA before or after their GRIHASTHASHRAMA life ?' It is highly erroneous to say that all RISHIS were householders. We all accept that SUKA, SANAKA etc. were very great RISHIS. There is no doubt at all that they were all JNANIS: but we should also keep in mind that they were unmarried.

D : If one wants to live as NAISHTIKA BRAHMACHARIN (life-long celibate) is it good to take a suitable VRATA (vow) for that ?

A : One can take such a vow if one is firm in one's decision. has VAIRAGYA and is devoid of lust. The VRATA taken thus will give one strength. However, one should be careful before taking such vows, since it may lead to great sin if there is any break of NAISHTIKA BRAHMACHARYA.

D : Does ACHARYAL opine that evil thoughts occuring in the mind of a BRAHMACHARIN will harm his BRAHMACHARYA ?

A : Certainly. If any evil thought occure without one's deliberate will, even that is not a good sign. It cannot be said that evil thought occuring without one's being aware of it will harm BRAHMACHARYA directly. However, if one gives place to evil thoughts deliberately, it has to be considered as violation of BRAHMACHARYA. Next, it cannot be said that bad dreams will harm directly, but if one gives place to evil thoughts consciously, no concession can be given for that.

D : Some people desire YOGA very much but they are not devoid of desires. Can such people also decide to live as life-long celibates ?

A : They can live as life-long BRAHMACHARINS if they have confidence in their mind. They can get initiation and grace from a GURU and further practise intense austerities. However, if there is a break in the vow-I will live as a life-long celibate, it will lead to great sin.

(He is called an URDHVARETHA whose VEERYA does not leave his body but rather gets transformed in to spiritual energy).

D : What prevents one from being an URDHVARETHA ?

A : Evil thought, evil speech, evil company, cinema, bad books etc., may prevent one from becoming an URDHVARETHA. So these should definitely be avoided. Excess heat in the body may also prevent one from being an URDHVARETHA. If it is due to the physical reason as mentioned here, to reduce the excess heat one can take boiled barley water. Physical exercises are also required always. If a bad thought appears in a dream, it indicates the bad state of one's mind. If evil thoughts arise even in waking state, it has to be considered as foul. If one is interested in intensifying one's VAIRAGYA. It should be firmly established in the mind, like a nail struck on a tree, that BRAHMACHARYA is very essential for oneself and that one cannot get happiness from anything else in this world. Even the food that we take has the capacity to change our mental state. Those interested in

BRAHMACHARYA should avoid food prohibited for them. It is indeed best not to take onion. garlic, salty and spicy food, meat, wine, coffee, tea etc. ASANAS such as SARVANGASANA are helpful to a BRAHMACHARI who desires to be an URDHVARETHA.

D : Is there any use in being an URDHVARETHA ?

A : When one becomes an URDHVARETHA, one can attain good meditation and also get a chance to advance rapidly in the spiritual path.

D : Do those with VAIRAGYA. who are lustless and who wish to live as NAISHTHIKA BRAHMACHARIS have the blessings of ACHARYAL ?

A : My blessings are always there for such persons. It is my opinion that it is highly laudable if many people are like that.

26. Sanyasi

D : Should action be renounced ?

A . Unnecessary actions should not be done. In spiritual life, one should not try to discard all actions right at the beginning, but should dedicate them to ISHWARA. It may be noted that actions themselves will leave one as one's mind gets purer and purer. Just as alum settles down at the bottom along with impurities in water, all actions dissociate themselves from that person on their own. That alone is the period best suited for one to take up SANYASA.

D : Should SANYASA be taken up before or after the attainment of JNANA ?

A : The SANYASA taken after the attainment of JNANA is called VIDWAT SANYASA while that taken before realisation is termed VIVIDISHA SANYASA. The former is superior to the latter.

D . What state of mind qualifies one for SANYASA?

A . After properly analysing the world,one concludes that one will not get any sort of happiness in the world, and leads a spiritual life and subsequently, when one becomes unconcerned about actions and their renunciation, then indeed can one be considered truly fit for SANYASA. One should have attained equipoise prior to taking up SANYASA.

D : Can one take SANYASA even at a young age ?

A : Yes ; provided one has intense VAIRAGYA.

यदहरेव विरजेत् नदहरेव प्रव्रजेत्

(One may take in SANYASA on the very day one attains intense VAIRAGYA ?

D : It is said that a SANYASA should keep moving from one place to another and also that BHIKSHA should be had only from houses of BRAHMINS, How can a SANYASI locate a BRAHMIN'S house ? Further, will it be sufficient now to take just the food obtained from BHIKSHA ?

A : In the olden days, AGRAHARAMS existed and so it was possible to live as enjoined by the SASTRAS. In the present times, it can be said that a SANYASI can remain at the same place for a few days, but it is not that proper to be in the same house.

D : Are there any regulations for a SANYASI ?

A : There are regulations for those who have taken SANYASA but have not attained JNANA. However, there is no restriction at all for those who have got SANYASA and have attained the Supreme state.

D : If a SANYASI does not get food for some days, should he make efforts to get food or should he keep quiet thinking 'I will not try to get it even if spiritual life is spoilt' ?

A : One who has realised the truth and is a SANYASI as well need not worry about food or death. However, for one who has not attained JNANA, if further obstacles in spiritual practice are likely to be present if one does not get food, then if one wishes, one may make some more effort to get BHIKSHA.

D : Does not the word 'CHATURMASYA' mean four months ? But nowadays, the SANYASIS remain in a place as a convention only for two months. Has this been so said in the SASTRAS ? Is this also permitted ?

A : Yes, it is permitted.

D : Do SANYASIS have to follow AHIMSA as a MAHAVRATA ?

A : Yes : the SANYASIS must follow AHIMSA at all times. For them, it is a MAHAVRATA.

D : Should SANYASIS induce others to get JNANA? Is it their duty to do so ?

A : It is not a rule for a SANYASI to prompt others towards realisation. There is nothing wrong even if he lives on his own. However, if he initiates somebody he will be eligible to become a GURU.

D : Is there any rule to the effect that all those who have attained JNANA should take up SANYASA?

A : No, If ISHWARA feels that they would do better by remaining in the midst of the world, He will keep them in the world (in an ASHRAMA other than SANYASA). However, I do not mean by this that a householder's life is better.

D : Will one who has attained JNANA care for SANYASA ? Should one lead a SANYASI'S life after JNANA dawns ?

A : It is not that such a one should make effort and get SANYASA. Actions wither away from that One on their own accord and it is therefore that One is referred to as a VIDWAT SANYASI.

27. Controlling the Mind

D : Many people feel sorry to say that they find it difficult to do DHYANA as their mind wanders in many directions. What advice would ACHARYAL give so that such people can practice DHYANA well ?

A . Actually, DHYANA is a secret. The GURU instructs only after keeping in mind the competence of the disciple. However, eventhough it is difficult to control the mind, it can still be controlled.

D : Some people say that it is just impossible to control the mind ? What does ACHARYAL say about their stance ?

A : Give a bundle of hundred rupee notes to the person who says that it is just impossible to control the mind. Ask him to count without mistake how many notes it contains. After he finishes his job, ask him if his mind wandered in all directions while counting ? You will indeed get the reply-'It did not' Will one's mind wander while counting one's salary ? What is the reason for this ? It is only the feeling that there should not be any mistake in that action. Why will the mind wander if such a feeling is had while practising DHYANA also ? In the GITA, ARJUNA has asked regarding the wandering nature of the mind thus-

चञ्चलं हि मनः कृष्ण प्रमाथि बलवत् दृढम् ।
तस्याहं निग्रहं मन्ये वायोरिव सुदुष्करम् ॥

(For the mind KRISHNA is restless, turbulent, strong and obstinate ; I think controlling it is difficult than controlling the wind). Lord KRISHNA has replied-

असंशयं महाबाहो मनो दुर्निग्रहं चलम् ।
अभ्यासेन तु कौन्तेय वैराग्येण च गृह्यते ॥

(No doubt, O son of KUNTI : It is indeed difficult to control the mind. Yet by practice and dispassion it can be controlled).

D : What is meant by 'practice' here ?

A : Making efforts again and again to control the mind is termed as practice.

D : In what sense is the word dispassion used here ?

A : When one has no attachment to any material or heavenly enjoyments one is said to be dispassionate. Dispassion is something like a foundation for spiritual life.

D : How should dispassion be cultivated ?

A : VAIRAGYA can appear in many ways, When one's close relative dies, it might appear to one that one does not want anything in this world, but such a dispassion will not last long. If it so remain for ever, it should come through

VIVEKA (discrimination): VIVEKA is the result of the enquiry as to what is SAT (that which is existent in reality) and what is not. The VAIRAGYA that is produced by that VIVEKA will remain steady. It is easier indeed to think-'There is no happiness at all for me from any object'-and this again is discrimination in another form. One can develop VAIRAGYA even through this VIVEKA.

D : How can it be said that happiness is not at all derived from objects ? Is it not got when something desired is eaten or when some other enjoyment is had ?

A : No. If carefully analysed, it will be perceived that happiness is not obtained from objects. If a certain thing is to be the cause of another, the rule of ANVAYA and VYATIREKA (concordance and discordance) should be satisfied there. The existence of the effect when the cause is present is ANVAYA (concordance). The absence of the effect in the absence of the cause is VYATIREKA (discordance). For instance, we say that mud is the cause of a pot. If only mud exists can the pot exist. This is ANVAYA. When there is no mud there is no pot. This is VYATIREKA. For the cause-effect relationship to exist, ANVAYA and VUATIREKA should be satisfied. If an object is to be the cause, and happiness the effect, the said rule must be satisfied between these two. However, it is not. Hence it is obvious that objects cannot be the cause of happiness.

D : Will Your Holiness explain this with an illustration.

A : Let us suppose that one is eating a sweet dish. Let us now analyse whether that dish is the cause of one's happiness. Even if one has the dish when one is ill etc, It does not make one happy. So, no happiness is derived eventhough the dish is present. Furthermore, in the absence of the dish if one has other joyful experience, one enjoys on that account. Therefore, the sweet dish cannot be said to be the cause of happiness.

D : When one object is absent, one gets happiness through another. Hence even if an isolated object cannot be the cause why cannot all objects collectively become the cause of happiness ?

A : Even this does not hold good. Everyone experiences happiness during the deep sleep state. On waking up one says, 'I slept happily. I was aware of nothing'. During deep sleep, no object whatsoever is present. Nevertheless, one does enjoy sleep. So it cannot also be said that collection of all objects amount to happiness. It cannot further be asserted that even if one object is absent, some other object is present to give happiness.

D : If objects do not cause happiness, how does a man get happiness when an object is obtained ?

A : Only because mental peace it is obtained. When a person desires an object, the mind ceases to remain calm because of the presence of desires. Hence, during that period there is no happiness. When the desired object is secured, that desire subsides, and hence the mind become peaceful. It is only due to that peace that one enjoys happiness. When one gets another desire, the mental peace is lost and the happiness disappears. When a second object is obtained, again, there is peace and happiness. It continues likewise Normally, man does not perceive that there is a gap separating two desires and does not realise that the happiness is produced only due to mental peace. Further, one also falls a prey to the wrong notion that an object alone is responsible for happiness.

D : If one comes to know that happiness can be obtained only by mental peace and not from objects, can one consequently get VAIRAGYA ?

A : Yes ; one can. If one keeps thinking that there is no happiness from objects and that they are also worthless then definitely one can get dispassion. For example, one having desire for wealth (money) should think 'I have to work hard to earn money. Even preserving the money earned is difficult. Finally there is sorrow even due to that. To avoid infatuation for women, one can consider thus 'Her body is full of just blood and flesh'. By such thoughts desires can be avoided and mental peace be obtained. By such thoughts dispassion will be induced and the mind will remain steady. Only the dispassionate mind is suited for practising dhyana. The dispassionate one can try and attain even the supreme state.

28. Dhyana

D . what is meant by DHYANA ?

A : DHYANA refers to making the mind one-pointed, that is, making the mind concentrate on just one object.

D : What is the main advantage of practising DHYANA ?

A : If mental concentration is achieved by practice, the mind can then be turned towards ISHWARA, and being thus purified, it can be turned towards the ATMA which is formless and devoid of attributes. By doing this, one can attain the state of NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI, which is the highest state of DHYANA, and realise the ATMA TATTVA.

D : Though meditation can do good to this extent, why is it very difficult to practice it ?

A : The difficulty in controlling the mind is indeed the reason.

D : How can the mind be controlled ?

A : As said by the Lord, by practice and dispassion the mind can be controlled.

D : What are the obstacles for DHYANA ?

A : Do you ask about obstacles during meditation or those at other times ?

D : I am asking about the obstacles which prevent one from attaining SAMADHI during meditation.

A : The first among the obstacles is VIKSHEPA i.e. the mind wanders in all directions. This is the foremost obstacle. The second is due to the mind attaining some sort of a dull state even in the absence of VIKSHEPA. Even this is bad. If one attains a JADA (passive) state similar to sleep, one will not reach the Supreme state. SAKASHAYA is the third obstacle. This is a state in which there is neither VIKSHEPA nor mental inertness. It gives a sort of happiness but the seed of desire is not destroyed. This is unlike SAMADHI. One should be careful even in this case. Keeping in mind all these alone has GUADAPADA said :

लये सम्बोधयेच्चित्तं विक्षिप्तं शमयेत्पुनः ।
सकाशायां विजानीयात् समप्राप्तं न चालयेत् ॥

(If the mind is in a state of torpor, it should be woken up. If it gets dispersed amongst objects, it should be calmed down. If it is inherent with the seed of desire that should be realised. If it is equipoised, it should be left undisturbed).

D : How can we control the mind from VIKSHEPA ?

A : We should turn the mind repeatedly on our object of meditation and with growth of dispassion, VIKSHEPA subsides. During meditation the conviction that meditation alone is important should exist. The feeling that the form or sound being meditated upon is actually present will be very useful for practicing meditation.

D : If the mind reaches the JADA state and is hence affected by it, what is to be done ?

A : If observed with alertness, one can know when exactly the mind tends to become passive and goes into the state of torpor. Realising this and by making an effort, the mind can be prevented from being in a state of dullness. For this, the JAPA that is being done may be intensified. If this is done the mind will return to its original state. But in spite of these, if the mind continues to drift into the state of torpor, it is advisable to take a small break, have a walk and then recommence the DHYANA. On certain occassions the mind should not be subjected to DHYANA. To prevent any possible strain on the mind it is advisable to commence DHYANA after a brief pause. But, if due to indolence, the mind refuses to go into meditation for most of the time, one should practice to forcibly involve the mind in DHYANA.

D : Is it necessary to do JAPA during DHYANA ?

A : Initially, while doing SAGUNA UPASANA it can be said that JAPA is essential to a certain extent. JAPA facilitates the mind to remain still without wandering. As the mind merges with the object of DHYANA, JAPA ceases to manifest of its own accord. Thus there is no need to stop JAPA wilfully.

D : How should meditation on an object with form be practiced ?

A : The methods to be followed in DHYANA can be instructed to different aspirants in varied ways. A common code of instructions cannot be prescribed. Since you have asked me, I shall tell you a method. One can proceed with the notion that one's ISHTA DEVATHA (one's favourite deity) is seated in the lotus of one's heart. If one finds it difficult to concentrate on the form conceived of earlier, initially one can use a picture of the deity for meditating. One should do JAPA awhile looking at the picture. Then, with eyes closed one should try to meditate on the deity with the idea that one is seeing that deity there. The mind may rest for a while without wandering. But once the mind starts wandering one open the eyes and look at the picture. This can be followed by meditating with the eyes closed. If the attempt is repeated in this manner, the form of one's ISHTA DEVATA will remain in one's mind, without the need for looking at the picture. This is only one of the methods of practicing meditation. This does not mean that all should follow only this method PATANJALI in his YOGA SASTRA says :

यथाऽभिमतध्यानाद्वा ।

(One can do meditation in the method that appeals to one), SAGUNA DHYANA helps the mind to remain still. DHYANA can be done on the form of the ISHTA DEVATA in which the mind conveniently rests. Meditating on sound also is another method. The GURU determines the right type of DHYANA suited to His disciple before initiating him into DHYANA.

D : Is it wrong to do meditation when one is not keeping good health ?

A : That depends on the general health condition. Those who have considerably advanced in meditation will be able to involve themselves in it at any time they wish to. But those who are still in the beginning stages may meditate when they are keeping good health, The more one involves in meditation the more it yields good results. This does not mean that one should involve himself so much as to cause strain to the mind. Experts in meditation can involve for hours together. But if one who is not acquainted, sits for several hours in DHYANA. it will only leave a bitter taste in him. Besides he may develop headache or some other pain.

D : How to meditate on the one that is formless or without any attributes (NIRGUNA DHYANA) ?

A : While doing NIRGUNA DHYANA one need not take the aid of any form or sound. NIRGUNA DHYANA is most suited to those who have attained higher levels in their spiritual practice. Meditation on that which is bereft of form and attributes is NIRGUNA DHYANA. NIRGUNA DHYANA will lead to NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI, the highest state of meditation. Here also, it cannot be said uniquely as to how this can be achieved. One of the methods for this is as follows. First, the thoughts that rise and fall in the mind should be just watched with the conviction that there is no connection between oneself and these thoughts. From this stems a feeling that there is no connection between the mental thoughts and oneself. In such a case, the thoughts arising in the mind will automatically subside. Another method is to consider oneself as the SACHIDANANDA ATMA by forcibly controlling the thoughts. While doing NIRGUNA DHYANA as above, the awareness of the body will be absent. After this, if the thoughts are controlled as there is no connection between the thoughts and oneself, the highest state can be attained.

D : Sometimes, while meditating the body experiences jerks. What is the reason for this ?

A : It means, normally that there is no strength in the body, or it indicates the manifestation of some power. It can also be due to the PRABHAVA (power) of the KUNDALINI SHAKTHI. Hence meditation can be continued without worrying about these matters.

D : Where should meditation be performed ?

A : Meditation should be done in a silent atmosphere.

D : Is it necessary to be seated on an ASANA ?

A : It is said that sitting on an ASANA is good. Lord KRISHNA Himself, in the GITA says–

चैलाजिनकुशोत्तरम्

It is good to spread a cloth on a deer skin which in turn is spread on a mat of darbha grass, and then to take this seat. During meditation, the back and the neck should be straight. This should be particularly catered to.

D : Many desire meditation sincerely but still they are not able to do it properly. Why is it so ?

A : It may seem that they like meditation but is it actually so ? 'No' will indeed be the answer. Even a little analysis of the life of most people show that they do not attach importance to meditation. They would in their daily lives attach more importance to sleep, food, office, examination etc., than meditation. If it is time for the office, that will be the end of meditation. Further, even when they sit for meditation, they do not sit with the idea. 'Now I do not need any other thought. Let anything happen in this world, whether connected or not with my body, I need only meditation now'. Besides, meditation in this birth is difficult for those who had not practised in their previous birth. Also those who had practiced meditation to a good extent in their previous birth will find practicing DHYANA much easier in this present birth. It is difficult to swim for one who goes to the rivers for the first time. However, it will become natural aa one practices. That is the case here also.

D : Will the conviction 'Now I am not going to give place to any worldly worry or thought.' help DHYANA while one is seated for meditation ?

A : Yes it will.

D : It is easy for one having intense VAIRAGYA to forget the wordly thougts but this is difficult for one attached to the objects. When one with attachment tries to meditate, thoughts of the objects alone arise repeatedly. We see some persons having intense dispassion but are unable to meditate well. Will ACHARYAL clarify the reason for this ?

A : Normally, DHYANA is easy for those who have much dispassion. It may be said that some people are not able to meditate now owing to their not having practiced it in their previous birth.

D : If one is defeated again and again in trying to meditate will one not get disinterested and irritated ?

A : Giving place for irritation during spiritual practice is equivalent to oneself standing as an obstacle in one's own way. Just to get an unworthy degree, one has to go to college etc., and learn for many years even with regard to a worldly matter. What then need be said regarding the efforts that should be made to get DHYANA which is very subtle and is far more superior ? Not only do people not spare any time for meditation or even efforts as they would for obtaining a degree etc., but they dare to say that they get irritated while doing it. You can see for yourself how fair it is. Sage PATANJALI, in his YOGA SUTRAS has said ;

स तु दीर्घकालनैरन्तर्यसत्कारासेचितो दृढभूमिः ।

(If practiced for a long time without any break and with sincerity, the supreme and stable state can be attained). If one were to get DHYANA in a few days or few months, then PATANJALI would not have stated in this manner.

D: There are some difficulties even for those who are getting good meditation. Sometimes they get very good meditation while on certain other occassions they say are not getting good meditation. What should be done to get good meditation always ?

A: Ill health, unrestricted food, laziness, worries, desires etc.. remain as obstacles for DHYANA. Therefore if we try and remove these obstacles DHYANA will become steady. If it does no come well even after some efforts, then without giving any room for worry, further efforts should be put. However, if meditation gets spoilt only because of a powerful obstacle one should make efforts and remove it with the guidance of a GURU. It is better to bear in mind that the mind is naturally peaceful daily just before sunrise and just after sunset, and try to meditate during such periods.

D: Is DHYANA alone sufficient to control desires ?

A: Those who get highest state of meditation, namely, SAMADHI can destroy desire merely through DHYANA, but for others meditation is insufficient. Since mundane tendencies occur when one is not meditating these tendencies wipe out those produced during meditation. Therefore even when one is not trying to meditate. perceiving faults in objects, by thinking no happiness can be obtained from objects, when one is outward turned will generate dispassion. Studying scriptural texts daily and contemplating on the ideas expressed therein help to conquer desires. Even the company of sages is helpful in conquering desires.

29. Nirvikalpa Samadhi

D : Will one's breathing completely stop when one attains NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A : No ; breathing persists to a small extent.

D : What is the characteristic of NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A : The awareness of the distinctiveness of the seer, the seen and act of seeing is indeed the special characteristic. The ATMA TATTVA will be clearly perceived in NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI. Further, Supreme Bliss is experienced.

D : Will there actually be a positive experience of Supreme bliss in SAMADHI or is it merely the absence of sorrow ?

A : In SAMADHI, not only is sorrow absent but even the supreme bliss is experienced. Even in JADA SAMADHI the bliss of ATMA is experienced but is not perceivable to this extent.

D. I heard that the AKHANDAKARA VRITTI is present in NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI. ACHARYAL also said that there is no distinctness of the seer, the seen and act of seeing in NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI. If so, will the knowledge of thought AKHANDAKARA VRITTI be there in SAMADHI?

A: No. When one is in the state of NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI one will not be aware of the presence of the AKHANDAKARA VRITTI.

D: If so, then how can it be said that AKHANDAKARA VRITTI existed during NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A: One can know that by means of inference and scriptural statements. If something is to be in memory then there should have been an experience before that. When the mind comes down from NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI there is a memory to the effect that the supreme bliss was experienced before. For the memory to be present there should have been an experience. And, if there is to be an experience connected with the mind, there should have been a thought. That mental VRITTI is called AKHANDAKARA VRITTI.

D: An object is required for a thought to arise in the mind. What then is the object of AKHANDAKARA VRITTI ?

A: The ATMA.

D: As I have understood if an object is to be perceived the mind along with the senses assumes the form of an external object. Only then does knowledge of the object arises. I learnt that it is the same in the case of dreams also with the difference that the mind itself transforms into the object, the senses being out of use. So, in both waking and dream states the mental VRITTI assumes the form of an object. ACHARYAL said that ATMA alone is grasped by AKHANDAKARA VRITTI. How can ATMA become an object of the VRITTI as it does not have a form at all ?

A : It is true that whenever the mind grasps an object the mental VRITTI assumes the form of that object. However, it cannot be said that it is just the same in this case too. When it is said that AKHANDAKARA VRITTI grasps the ATMA, it only means that since the mind is extremely pure in that state it just cannot be discerned from BRAHMAN. The mind then becomes like a crystal ; the ATMA JYOTHI manifests in it clearly. Just as a crystal when seen in the vicinity of a red flower appears red, so also is the nature of the ATMA seen there clearly. This AKHANDAKARA VRITTI is indeed the one that destroys ignorance.

D : Will a single experience of the NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI be sufficient to attain BRAHMA JNANA ?

A : Normally, it is not sufficient. During NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI, the Supreme State is experienced. After alighting from that state, that experience will slowly start fading. However, just after coming down from it everything will be perceived verily as ATMA. Nothing else other than the ATMA will be perceived. To cite an example, it would be something like this 'I am like a big ocean. It is in me that this form called the world is produced'. This can only be understood by experience and is inexplicable with an illustration. If one gets the experience of NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI repeatedly, one's JNANA Will become stablised. After the realisation becomes stable, the mind will be destroyed and one will become a JEEVAN MUKTHA.

D : Will one come down even from NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A . Yes. if PRARABDHA is not exhausted one will certainly come down even from NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI. We can find varied illustrations for this in the YOGA SUTRAS and YOGA VASISTA.

D : Can one attain JNANA without experiencing NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A . JNANA is nothing but knowing one's true nature. JNANA can be obtained even through VICHARA (enquiry) without getting NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI. NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI is one specific path albeit it is improper to say that it is the only path.

D : During NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI will there be an awareness of oneself or the surroundings ?

A : No.

D : Can one be awakened from NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A : In most cases. it can be done with some difficulty. Sometimes it becomes almost impossible to wake one up.

D : Can one predetermine as to how long one should stay in NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A : It can be done with sufficient practice. If such a SANKALPA is made before going into SAMADHI, one can later alight at the predetermined time. For example, if one thinks, 'I will go for PUJA in an hour, and then goes into SAMADHI, then one can come down from SAMADHI after being in that state for exactly one hour.

D : Will ACHARYAL Kindly explain as to what type of experience preceeds the onset of NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A : It is impossible to give a very accurate description. However, I will give a rough account of it. First it can be seen that the awareness of the body and the surroundings gradually vanishes. Then only the thoughts in the mind will be perceived. As meditation is practiced further, even those mental thoughts will subside.

It will appear to one as 'I am growing infinitely like the sky'. Then comes a great blissful experience. After this will be a sudden change to the effect that distinct awareness of the differentiation of the seer, the seen and the act of seeing ceases. That experience is beyond words.

D : What is the procedure to be adopted to attain NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A : Usually NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI can be attained if one repeatedly gets SARVIKALPA SAMADHI in which case the mental focus is on one object.

D : Will the distinction of the seer, the seen and the act of seeing also cease ?

A : No ; such a difference is destroyed only in NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI. SARVIKALPA SAMADHI is the highest state of ordinary meditation. In this state, the mind is fixed on just one object but, in NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI only the ATMA is perceived.

D . Will the joy derived in SARVIKALPA SAMADHI be the same as that in NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI?

A : No ; the joy that is derived in NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI is the highest. But it can be said that the happiness obtained in SARVIKALPA SAMADHI is infinitely great when compared to the joy derived from sense objects.

D : Can it be said that one will attain MOKSHA if killed while in NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A : It cannot be said so. MOKSHA can be attained only if PRARABDHA is destroyed and JNANA becomes stable.

D : Can it be said that if one dies while in NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI one can attain JNANA very easily in one's next birth ?

A : Yes ; it may be said thus.

D : Is there a possibility for one to fall down from spiritual life even after being in NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A : Yes ; there is a chance for a fall until realisation becomes steady. I have come across such cases.

D : Can NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI be obtained by means of drugs, self-hypnosis etc. ?

A : No.

D : Is it possible to feel thirst, hunger etc., after the mind comes down from NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI ?

A : Usually this is not felt, but sometimes a little bodyache or hunger may be felt. Such a perception is however, rare.

D : Will ACHARYAL say something about NIRVIKALPA SAMADHI from personal experience ?

A . (Smiling) Do you think that all the while I was merely repeating like a parrot just what is mentioned in the SASTRAS ?

30. Nadanusandhanam

D . What is meant by NADANUSANDHANAM ?

A : Generally speaking, it is also a kind of meditation.

D : How is it to be practised ?

A : There are a few ways. I shall tell one of them. The ear, nose and mouth should be closed by the fingers and the sound that is heard inside one's body at that time should be carefully listened to.

D : How is one to breathe if the nose and mouth are closed completely ?

A : Yes, it is not possible, but I did not mean that the nose should be shut completely. When it is necessary it can be opened.

D : Is there any benefit by paying attention to the sound produced inside ?

A : Yes. It is essential to make the mind one pointed. This can either be done by fixing the mind on a form or by paying attention to the sound. External noise will not be heard when the ears are closed. But the internal sound will be audible and therefore even by concentrating on that sound that mind will become one pointed.

D : How is one to concentrate on the sound heard internally.

A : One can concentrate just as one would concentrate on the external sounds This is because the internal sound can be perceived when the ears are closed.

D : While meditating in this manner is it necessary to concentrate on a form ?

A : No, it will do if concentrated on the internal sound.

D : What will result if the mind is fixed on the sound alone ?

A : Gradually, the mind becomes more peaceful. External noise and other disturbances will cease to distract the mental concentration. Hence the sound heard from inside will be very lucid. With the passaged of time, varied types of sound will be heard from inside. However, finally all sounds cease and the mind becomes very calm.

D : Can we see the manifestation of any special power when meditating in this manner ?

A : Sometimes one can hear the sounds taking place even far away, One having intense meditation can also hear if so desired the sound at far off places. However, it will do great harm to DHYANA if one falls a pray to the SIDDHIS (powers) like clairaudiance. So the mind should never be lead towards these siddhis.

D : Is this method of NADANUSANDHANAM better than meditation on a form ?

A . I never opined that way. This depends on the competence of the disciple. The GURU also may advise NADANUSANDANAM for some disciples and the meditation on form for some others, It all depends only on the disciple.

D : In NADANUSANDHANAM is there any speciality compared to the other methods ?

A : (Smiling) How will one practicing NADANUSANDHANAM perceive external sound or external form if one closes one's ears and eyes ? Therefore you can consider this itself as a speciality.

D : Is there any difficulty to practicing this type of meditation ?

A : (With a smile) Will there not be pain when the hands are kept closed over the ears for a long duration ?

D : Is there an alternative method of practicing NADANUSANDHANAM ?

A : There are quite a few methods. I have watched Buddhists practicing meditation with an aid of a bell that can resonate for a long duration. Two persons will sit facing each other. One will ring the bell and the other will contemplate on the sound that resonates. When the first person completes his meditation, the second person will meditate when the former rings the bell. Simliar such methods are prevalent and I have just mentioned one among them,

31. Lambikayoga

D : I understand that Sri VIDYATHIRTHA spent his last days in LAMBIKA YOGA. Will ACHARYAL kindly explain what is meant by LAMBIKA YOGA ?

A : In short, during LAMBIKA YOGA nectar will flow down from the SAHASRA CHAKRA in the head. When that necter is tasted, hunger and thirst will disappear. Above all, good health could be mentioned.

D : How does such a nectar flow down ?

A : According to HATA YOGA, the tenden at the lower part of the tongue should be cut little by little. Then certain medicines should be applied at that portion of the tongue and the lower portion of the tongue should be cut to a little more extent. Simultaneously the tongue should be stretched out little by little. When this is practised the tongue becomes thinner and elongated. When this elongated tongue is stretched it should meet the space between the eye brows. The elongated tongue should now be folded' inserted behind the throat and thrust upwards. When meditation is practised now, nectar will flow down,

D : Does meditation of this nature cause physical pain and dumbness ?

A . It cannot be guaranteed that there will be no pain but it is wrong to say that one will become dumb by practicing in this manner. Even after practicing in this manner the audibility will be clear ?

D : How will the nectar taste ? Will one know by experience that it is flowing down.

A : There is no need to say that nectar is tasty. It can surely by experienced that it flows down to the throat.

D : Will hunger and thirst disappear completely once the nactar is tasted ?

A : It cannot be assumed that they will disappear. They will not be perceived for some time, but will reappear later. Even when manifest there will be no weakness as though one has fasted for a long time. The nectar is very little in quantity and so hunger and thirst will not be absent for long

D : Has ACHARYAL seen anybody who has cut the tongue to this manner for hunger and thirst to disappear ?

A : Yes, I have seen one person. He also had a clear voice. He also demonstrated it by folding his tongue and pushing if upwards and was raising a peculiar sound. He had succeeded by sheer effort in obtaining the nectar.

D : Will any external sound or disturbance disturb him then ?

A : Yes if the external disturbances are too much it could cause his death even,

D : Is there any other easier way for obtainig the nectar rather than cutting the tongue in this manner ?

A : What is the doubt in this ? Certainly there is, what I told now is just the HATA YOGA method of obtaining the nectar. For some people it will come during meditation due to the penance done in the previous birth. My ACHARYAL has told me about the flow of nectar. He had that knowledge not only from the books but aiso by experience.

D : In which kind of meditation will such nectar flow ?

A : This happens during the SAGUNA DHYANA, and I have watched it.

D : If the nectar flows down from the head, then one can come to the conclusion that nectar is stored there in a vessel. Is it not surprising ?

A : Whether it is surprising or not, that is not the question. It exists as an actual direct experience. Hence there is no doubt about it. Further, besides being tasty the nectar also frees one from hunger and thirst.

D : If such a LAMBIKA YOGA is advised to all. then countless people suffering from hunger can be benefitted. Isn't it ?

A : There is no use in advising like this. Only a very few will get the flow of nectar.

D : Has ACHARYAL noted any other special charactristic in persons who have experienced this flow of nectar ?

A : Yes, I have, for some people a litlle quantity of water also will ooze out from the head. It need not occur for all but this can happen.

D : When will the water ooze out from the head ?

A : It may come anytime, even while taking food.

D : How much ?

A : More or less one UDDHRNI full.

D : Is it pure water or any other fluid resembling water ?

A : (Smiling) Pure water

D : Will there be any inconveneince on account of of water oozing out ?

A : There is no inconveneince at all due to this release. Its appearance, can be removed with a cloth. Otherwise it will flow down the face.

D : What is the reason for such flow of water ?

A : It does, and is an experience. This is all.

D : Has ACHARYAL made effort to make the nectar flow in this manner ?

A : I neither pay attention to such SIDDHIS nor do I make efforts to obtain it. It just comes as it pleases. I do not make any effort to get it or to even prevent it.

D : ACHARYAL pointed out that nectar can come for some people even if the lower part of the tongue is not cut. Can such persons make further efforts to get nectar ?

A . When they do dhyana. It will be a little useful to keep the tongue folded back. They get the nectar now, only as a result of the meritorious deeds performed in their previous births, It will do good to them to practise as mentioned above.

D : Do those practising along the spiritual path have to control hunger and thirst through LAMBIKA YOGA ? Can they just sit in meditation without bothering about food ?

A : No. There is no need to do like this at all. The aim of the MUMUKSHUS is only to get the ATMAJNANA and attain MOKSHA. If the attention is furthered towards the SIDDHI's it will be of no avail. It occured naturally to sages like VIDYATHIRTHA. It is for this reason they allowed it. However, if a beginner spends his time on this alone, everything will be a waste. This is not important at all. We should take care that the mind does not deviate from the goal.

32. Kundalini

(Introduction: Kundalini is the name of a SHAKTHI (power) in the form of a snake which is in the lower side of our backbone called Merudanda. It is said that seats of SHAKTHI are present in certain particular locations in the backbone, They are said to be in the form of lotus. If the KUNDALINI comes to these locations, it is acknowledged that the SHAKTHI manifests in a special way. It is normal for the KUNDALINI to remain at the bottom of the MERUDANDA. There exists a NADI called SUSHUMNA NADI. It is a conclusion that one attains SAMADHI if KUNDALINI rises to the head through this NADI).

D : Do the KUNDALINI and the YOGA CHARKAS really exist ?

A : The KUNDALINI and the YOGA CHAKRAS are the centres of energy. If they are meditated upon, the power will manifest outside in a special way. However, physically there does not exist any kind of lotus.

D : Then why do we talk of the CHAKRA ?

A : As I said earlier, the power will manifest if contemplated upon suitably. Normally, one will die if one does not breathe for a long time. However if one practises PRANAYAMA well, one can remain without breathing for a long time. I have seen those who have obtained powers by contemplating on YOGA CHAKRAS in this manner. Some people can lift a heavy weight merely by moving their eyelids. So have I heard. Such powers can and do occur.

D : People say that one can attain good by waking up the KUNDALINI and making it pass through the SUSHUMNA NADI. How is one to awaken the KUNDALINI ?

A : It may be awakened through suitable meditation and through PRANAYAMA.

D : How to practise PRANAYAMA ?

A : There are different kinds of PRANAYAMA. Hence it is better to get the initiation from a GURU and then practise it.

D : Will ACHARYAL clarify, regarding an easy method of PRANAYAMA, to be done during the normal Anushtana ?

A : While doing the PRANAYAMA, one should be seated on a firm ASANA and keep the back straight. Then keeping the right hand fore finger and the middle finger folded, the ring finger and the little finger should be used for closing the left nostril while the thumb should be used to close the right nostril. PRANAYAMA is then done by breathing in through one nostril, retaining it for sometime and then releasing it out through the other nostril. After practicing in this manner for sometime, air should he breathed in through that nostril through which air was released last time. So the ordinary PRANAYAMA has got three parts. They are namely POORAKAM, KUMBHAKAM and RECHAKAM. Breathing in is POORAKAM, retaining the breath is KUMBHAKAM and breathing out is RECHAKAM. SASTRAS prescribe regulations to these in different ratios. One will not find it difficult if practised in the ratio 1:2:2. To obtain special benefits during PRANAYAMA, the 'JALANDARA ODYANANA MOOLA BANDAS' should be performed during the KUBHAKAM. Those can be learnt from the knowers of YOGA. It will do no good to the body if the BANDAS are practised without prior learning from a GURU.

D : While air is retained, should it be retained to the extent that the Stomuch bulges ?

A : No, it should not be retained to such an extent care should be taken while doing PRANAYAMAM as otherwise only negative effects will be obtained.

D : Will one who has attained SAMADHI be aware that KUNDALINI has gone up ?

A : There is no rule that one should be aware. There can also be the absence of the awareness. The awareness may not be present for these who have attained SAMADHI through the path of VEDANTHA. However, if one wishes to be aware that the KUNDALINI is rising, then it can be noted. I have mentioned a simple method. viz, PRANAYAMA, for raising it to the SAHASRARA There are many books that deal on these subjects. I have not mentioned all of those methods here .

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33. Amanaska Yoga

D : One feels happy even if one just keeps quiet and does not do anything. Therefore can one sit quite for sometime to obtain mental peace even with the eyes open ?

A : Surely, it can be done provide it is not indolence. Sages like YAGNAVALKA too have said that it may be practised in this manner. The mind remaining calm even with the eyes open are termed in the SASTRAS as the AMANASKA YOGA.

D : What is meant by AMANASKA YOGA ?

A : It is a state of mind wherein no thoughts appear. Normally, we dwell on different objects. It keenly watched. It would appear that the thoughts occur continuously in the mind, but in fact there will be a gap between each thought· The ATMA CHAITANYA will clearly shine when there is absence of even a single thought.

People do not note the perception of the true nature of the self as the time limit between each thought is very short. SHANKARA has illustrated it in LAGHUVAKYA VRITTI !

मुक्ताभिरावृतं सूत्रं मुक्तयोर्मध्य ईक्ष्यते ।
तथा वृत्तिविकल्पैः चित्स्पष्टा मध्ये विकल्पयोः ॥

In a garland made of pearls, the thread is unseen in places where pearls are present, but in between two pearls the thread is seen. In the same way, the ATMA is not perceived when a thought is present whereas it is perceived in the period in between the fall of one thought and the rise of another. We can obtain happiness if we calmly enlarge the gap between one thought and another.

D : Can this be practiced even with the eyes open ?

A : As opined earlier, our aim is to see that no thought arises in the mind. So there is no harm in keeping the eyes open at times other than the period of DHYANA. It is sufficient if the mind does not wander towards external objects. While practising this, one should remain calm and free from worries. No effort should be made to do or dwell on anything. If any thought arises in the mind without yielding further room for it, the thought itself should be quelled.

D : What indication is there to show that one progressess in the path of AMANASKA YOGA ?

A : The mental peace and happiness that one derives indeed will go to show that one is progressing ahead in this path.

D : Is it not difficult to see to that no thought arises in the mind at all ?

A : Yes, it is of course difficult to attain the supreme state of thoughtlessness in the mind but the mind can be kept peaceful to a greater extent.

D : Do the mundane people also have the power to control the mind ?

A : Do net all people sleep ?

D : Yes.

A : How ?

D : I am at a loss to know the inner meaning of ACHARYAL's question.

A : People lie down. After that, how do they go to sleep ? They close their eyes and remain without thinking. Within a short time sleep envelops them. Is it not ?

D : Yes.

A : We note that only during sleep that people are quite peaceful. It means they also have controlled the mind. This takes places involuntarily. Is it not so ?

D : Yes, it is so.

A : Therefore, it should be said that all are controlling the mind, but the mundane people control it without any effort and without being conscious of it. In the path of AMANASKA YOGA, we should practice it in the state of awakenness.

D : Can the AMANASKA YOGA be done in any place ?

A : It may be practised anywhere but there should be facilities to sit comfortably. How can one practise it while running a race ?

D : Will there by any harm while practicing the AMANASKA YOGA ?

A : No harm will be produced.

D : What should one be careful about, when practicing AMANASKA YOGA ?

A : (With a laugh). One should not go to sleep. That alone should be catered to with alertnes.

D : How can one practise this YOGA ?

A : One will not doze, if one is paying attention.

In the AMANASKA YOGA. If one sits quiet without any worry and ignores the thoughts in the mind gradually, the concentration will be directed only inwards. Even if the eyes are open, one's attention will not be diverted. On account of this one can remain happy and also advance in the spiritual path.

◆

34. Maya

D : When there is no light a rope can appear to be like a snake. Similarly the Supreme Being appears as the world. This I have learnt from the texts. To consider a rope for a snake someone different from both the snake and the rope is necessary. Simiiarly, if the BRAHMAN appears as the world a seer is necessary. Such an entity is not there. Therefore is the illustration proper ?

A : The comparison can never be identical to the original. If the comparison becomes identical to the original then it itself will become the original. The rope snake illustration is only to show that one thing can appear as another. Our grasp of its meaning should not exceed this restricted sense of the comparison.

D : If one on seeing a rope is to get a wrong feeling that it is a snake then one should have seen a snake before. percaiving that rope. If one had not seen before, the awareness that it is a snake would not have occured when one saw the rope. In the same way, if the Supreme Being is to be thought of as the world, then there should be a real world. Is it wrong to construe in this manner ?

A : Yes it is wrong. To consider a rope for a snake, a knowledge of the snake is necessary. It is not correct to say that a real snake should have been present in order to get knowledge about the snake. I will give an example. A person may imagine a tree wrongly to be a ghost. The person might have seen that ghost sometimes in his dream. When he sees the tree now, he imagines the ghost which he had seen in the dream. Did that ghost really exist ? No, because it was seen only in the dream. Everyone knows that whatever is seen in the dream is unreal. So it is only the knowledge of the snake that is necessary and not a real snake. Similarly, for the Supreme BRAHMAN to appear as the world it is only the delusion (MAYA) or a wrong notion that must be responsible and there is no need for a real world.

D : Is MAYA real ? If MAYA were to be SAT (true) then it will be wrong to say that The BRAHMAN or the Supreme Being is ADVAITIN (nondual). It cannot be said that MAYA does not exist, since we are able to see the effects of MAYA. Hence, MAYA cannot also be called 'ASAT'. Will ACHARYAL please explain how this is so ?

A : MAYA cannot be said to be 'SAT' because it is destroyed the moment the true JNANA dawns. Just as the dream disappears when we wake up, so also the BRAHMA JNANA destroys MAYA. So this cannot be 'SAT' and therefore it cannot be said that there is something called MAYA different from BRAHMAN and existing as a second entity. As the same MAYA cannot also be termed 'ASAT', we cannot see its effects in the form of the world. That is why it has been said with logic as the basis that MAYA is neither SAT nor ASAT.

D : If it is said that everything except BRAHMAN is ASAT, will not the VEDAS also become untrue? If the VEDAS become false, will not the ADVAITA Philosophy which is based on the VEDAS also become untrue?

A : The ADVAITINS say from the highest stand point that the world does not really exist but from VYAVAHARIKA (ephemeral) stand point they do not say that the world does not exist. If it is said that the body is real then only to the same extent it should be said that this world too is real. From the worldly stand point it is wrong to say that the VEDAS and the world are untrue. Further no damage will be done even if it is postulated that the VEDAS are not real since even an unreal thing can give us a real effect. For example, it can be assumed that a tiger chases us in our dream. We may wake up due to the fear produced by the feeling that the tiger is chasing us. Here, the unreal tiger caused the real effect of waking up. In the same way, even if it is assumed from a broad based view point that the VEDA is unreal just as the world, there need not be any lack of confidence in the fact that higher good (SHREYAS) results out of the VEDAS.

D : We see the world and make an enquiry about it. If the world itself is unreal, then is it correct to say that research carried on by the scientists is all wrong ?

A : We do not say that perceiving the world and analysing its laws are wrong. This much, however, is certain that the world cannot be analysed and conclusively understood as the world is definitely like this. A bat recognises the presence of objects by means of sound waves. The world that it perceives is different from what we see. It does not see the world with its eyes. Similarly, if we had the X-ray vision then our perception of the world would be different from what it is now. If it is asked which of these visions is correct, the answer will be that both are correct. The worlds perceived in both the ways are true as well. So it will not be correct to say that the world is only like this. When we see an object, our perception should not make modification in the perceived object, but we cannot see a world which does not get modified by our perception. Hence it cannot be said that what we see is the true world. We can only say that this is a world 'as it appears to our mind.' If we see the world through a dark glass will not everything appear dark ? Keeping just this in mind it cannot be said that everything is dark, So also here, we see the world only as the mind shows it to us. Hence it can only be said that 'these are the laws of the world as we look at it' and not 'this indeed is the world, it is only like this ; these alone are its laws etc.'

D : It is said that MAYA alone is the cause of all bondages. Why does the MAYA exist ?

A : As for as the JNANI is concerned, there is nothing called MAYA. The Supreme Being alone exists. So with regard to him there is no place for this question at all. Further questions and answers can be present only in the world of MAYA. If such a question is to be answered by means of logic, one should have understood the nature of the MAYA. Since JNANA dawns at that time when one grasps the true nature of MAYA. BRAHMAN (the Supreme Being) alone will be perceived. Therefore it is not fair to expect a proper answer to this question beceuse the question itself is not alright, MAYA itself is like a big question mark. The Supreme Being is non-dual but MAYA creates this appearance of duality. This indeed is the power of MAYA. In the absence of adequate light, a rope may seem to be a snake. Seeing this, one may ask 'Why should the rope appear like a snake ? Are they not two different things ?' Can this be answered properly ?

No, because the reason for this is ignorance. Since the question 'Why does ignorance exist ?, cannot be answered, we cannot give a proper reply to the first question also. Similar is the case here. The rope will still seem to be a rope to the one who has no wrong conception. Therefore there is no place at all for the question : Why does it appear as a snake. One who has a wrong conception and therefore to whom it seems to be a snake, cannot be asked the question : 'Why does it appear as a snake'. This is because as far as that person is concerned, it does not appear as a snake but it is indeed a snake. Let us consider another one's view. This person initially thought the rope to be a Snake. Only later did that one realise that it was a rope. If that person is approached and asked the question. Why did the rope appear as a snake ?' The reply will be : 'It was due to my wrong conception', If the question 'Why did that wrong idea occur? is put the said person will not be able to answer because now that person sees only the rope. If it is asked 'Where is the beginning for a circle ?, what answer can be given ? This questioner asked this question only with the conception that A circle has got a begining Therefore it is the question that is not proper and thus it cannot be said that the answer is improper. Besides it also does not mean that the Scriptures do not give a convincing answer about MAYA. Hence the question : 'Why does MAYA exist?' Is not proper

D : Will ACHARYAL kindly explain that the world appears as such only because of MAYA ?

A : We see the seed of a banyan tree. If it is btoken there will be nothing big in it. But a big banyan tree grows from it. Does it not at first sight, seem to be a magical feat ? In the same way from the semen of one person another person is born, grows big and performs actions. Does not this also look like magic ? From this it should indeed be said that the world seems to be an 'appearance'. Further here we see the world just as we see it in the dream. We can thus say that this also is not correct to say that it is different from the dream. Besides, however much we ponder about it we cannot conclusively answer any question. Perforce one has to say 'I do not know' because one is unable to carry on the enquiry beyond a certain limit: When will this happen ? If a magician shows a thing before us, and if it is asked 'How is that ?' it cannot be enquired into beyond a certain level. There will not be any answer even to the question 'why' ? Let us suppose that we see in a dream a huge elephant within a small room. The doors of the room are very small. If one starts enquiring in the dream as to how this elephant came into that room, what will be the answer? It would only seem that it could not have come. However we would only say that 'We saw the elephant, I do not know how this elephant came !'.

After waking up from the dream state we will say, 'No, the elephant did not come there at all'. Here also it is similar to the other situation. On making enquiries beyond a certain extent of the question about this phenomenon, it can only be answered that this is also like an illus no or an INDRAJALA. SASTRAS which are better than logic also declare that the world is an illusion.

मायां तु प्रकृतिं विद्यात् ।

(Know the prakriti to be MAYA,) Above quotation also states that the experiences of the JNANIS too is that the world is a MAYA and not that there is world apart from BRAHMAN. Hence the world appears only because of MAYA. It is a conclusion that it does not really exist.

D : If the world is just an appearance why has its creation been mentioned in the SASTRAS ?

A : If a child asks about the sun, what do we say ? We do reply that the sun rises in the east and sets in the west. We do know that only the earth rotates and there is no rising and setting of the sun. Don't we say that the sun itself rises, just to satisfy the inquisitivenese of the child ? Similarly when one seeing the world gets a doubt as to its origin, the SASTRAS being like a mother mentions little about the world. Then gradually it takes the enquirer, stage by stage and finally explains the truth. By describing as

नेति नेति ।

(not this not this). It then explains about the Supreme Being. Hence the mention that has been made in the SASTRAS regarding creation is only with a view to cause the rise of true knowledge and to convince the enquirer. It does not represent the actual state of being.

35. Waking State And Dream State

D : Is the waking state different from the dream state ?

A : Not so, when you view from the highest stand point.

D : Then does it mean that everything is the conception of the mind ?

A : Yes.

D : Will ACHARYAL please explain ?

A . In the dream state we see a world which appears to be real and this is so when we are witnessing the dream. Similarly we view the world in the waking state. This also seems to be real. We experience joy and sorrow in the waking state. Likewise, we experience them in the dream too. Therefore both the states are unreal.

D : In the waking state, if a book is placed on a table it remains at the same place the next day also, but in the dream if a book is placed it is not to be found there on waking. Considering this difference alone, can it not be said that the waking state is real and that the dream state unreal ?

A : Suppose, for example, you keep a book on the table in a dream. Then you go to do some other work in that dream itself. On returning again won't the book remain in the same place ?

D : Yes, it will be there.

A : This example would have cleared your doubt because in the waking state if a book was kept it remains in the same place at some other time. Similarly even in the dream, the book kept earlier can be in the table during the dream but does not exist on waking up. In the same way the book placed during the waking state does not seem to be on the table at all during the dream.

D : There seems to be another difference also.

A : What is it ?

D : Some others see us sleeping. So they can assert that we were definitely sleeping. Therefore is not the dream that we see as unreal in the waking state ?

A : Let us assume that in a dream you see yourself sitting. At that time you might be thinking about many matters. In your dream itself, some people might see you sitting. As far as they are concerned your sitting at that place is real but that you are thinking it as unreal. Is it not so ?

D : Quiet so.

A : Were you really sitting before those people who came in that dream ?

D : No.

A : The reason being that your sitting at that place and the other people watching you, both belong to the dream. Similar is the case here also.

D : The waking state continues for years, while the dream exists only for a few hours. What about this difference ?

A : If this reasoning is to be used, you will have to answer the following. If one dream lasts thirty minutes and another ten minutes will you any that the dream which lasted thirty minutes is more real than the dream that lasted ten minutes or that the ten minute duration dream. Is more unreal than the thirty minute duration dream ?

D : No.

A : Therefore just by giving the reason that the waking state lasts long it cannot be said that the waking state is more real than the dream state. Further, that 'time passess on' itself is an imagination of the mind. In a dream, one may think that one had spent a long time in that state, but with regards to the waking state only ten minutes might have been spent. So the statement that the length of time is longer for the waking state is wrong. Both in the waking state and the dream state. 'Time has a dimension' is just an imagination of the mind occuring in those states.

D : I accept that the world in the waking state is very similar to the world experienced in the dream as ACHARYAL had said. However, here a doubt has arisen.

A : You can express your doubt without any hesitation,

D : We are not aware that whatever we experience in the waking state is unreal. Why ?

A : Normally, when you sleep, is it realised that what is seen in the dream is unreal, that is, is it known while dreaming itself that dream is false?

D : No.

A : When is it known to you that the perception had in the dream is false ?

D : Only when I come to the waking state.

A . Similarly, we are sleeping in this huge dream which has been created by MAYA. It will be known to us that this world also is false only when this dream disappears.

D : When will one wake up from this dream?

A : When one attains JNANA and comes to know that one is that very ATMAN who is devoid of all kinds of bondages and is of the nature of Supreme Bliss. Then only this big dream will disappear.

D : How will the Realisation occur ?

A : When one completely purifies one's mind and comes to the conclusion that the world is unreal indeed, 'I am that very ATMA which is witnessing this' then only this dawn of the true knowledge occur.

D : What role do the GURU and the SASTSRAS play in this matter ?

A : The teachings of the GURU, which are in accordance with the SASTRAS produce the knowledge of the TATTVA.

D : Do not the SASTRAS and the teachings of the GURU belong to this unreal world ? Under such a circumstance how can they generate the knowledge of the real TATTVA ?

A : Yes these teachings also belong to the world. Still the knowledge of TATTVA can occur. Let us assume that in the dream a tiger is chasing us. We may wake up out of the fear that the tiger is chasing us. In the same way, the dictates of the SASTRAS and the teachings of the GURU wake us up from this big dream.

D : Then what is creation ?

A : Perception alone is creation. There is no other creation other than the perception. The perception that a thing exists indeed is creation and nothing else.

D : Then is it not a waste to consider that other living beings also exist ?

A : Yes.

D : Then what about ISHWARA ?

A : He too is a part of your dream. In reality there is neither the cause nor the effect. One has bondage as long as one considers that one has bondage. One who feels that one is free is indeed free. That is why it has been said.

मुक्ताभिमानी सुक्तो हि बद्धो वद्धाभिमान्यपि ।

That is one who considers oneself as a MUKTA is a MUKTA. One who feels that he has bondage does have bondage. Therefore one should remove the wrong impression that one has bondage.

D : Is the removal of the wrong idea that one has bondage itself a quicker means of attaining MOKSHA ?

A : Yes. So far, I was speaking with the DRISHTI-SRISHTI VADA, (perception-creation logic) in mind but this will not be suitable for many people, because their minds will not be pure enough to understand this philosophy. Everybody will accept that the dream state alone is unreal. If it is said that the waking state also is unreal they will be frightened. For some people it may even appear that the dream is also real from the statement. 'The waking state is akin to the dream state'. That is why the SASTRAS do not speak much of the DRISHTI-SRISHTI VADA. Seldom they speak about it.

36. The Sastra and Science

D : We learn from science that man evolved from animals. Thousands of years ago, man was living in caves. Cooking too was not known to him. How could the VEDAS have been there at this time ? Further, how could the people have lived as per the dictates of the VEDAS ?

A : Let us suppose that you have a dream. If you see yourself there as a ten year old boy, should you not logically have been a child earlier ?

D : Yes.

A : Did the dream start since you were a two year old child ?

D : No ; the dream begins suddenly showing me as a ten year old boy.

A : That is, even though it suits logic to say that in the dream you should have been a small boy initially, in reality it was not so. Is it not so ?

D : Yes.

A : Therefore it is not proper to extrapolate the time element since the dream started suddenly in the same way, the contention of the scientists is also not proper. Some people may say by means of reasoning that "We see a person in a particular position now. Many years ago he could have lived only in a cave because he would not have had this much knowledge". However, just as a dream begins suddenly, this world has arisen suddenly. So here also it is not proper to extrarapolate the time element backwards.

D : Scientists say that life evolved from matter. They say that life is a quality of a thing devoid of consciousness and that consciousness is produced when the elements of matter fuse in a particular proportion. Is such an opinion wrong?

A : This indeed is the philosophy of the CHARVAKAS. This is not a proper school of thought at all. Why does a scientist say that consciousness arises only from things and that there is no distinct entity called consciousness ?

D : Since consciousness is seen only where the body or cell exists. Where the body is absent we do not perceive the consciousness there.

A : Such a logic is not proper. Let us take an example. Wherever light is present, objects are seen there and further everybody is aware that an object will not be seen in the absence of the light. Therefore is it correct to say that perception is a quality of light ?

D : How can perception be a quality of light ? It can't be.

A : That is, the object is seen only when there is light. The object will not be seen when there is no light. Still the sight is not a quality of light. Same is the case here too. Consciousness is seen where the body is present. Consciousness is not perceived where the body is absent. Just because of this will it be correct to say that consciousness is an attribute of the body ? It will not be correct at all. The body may be required to know that consciousness exists, but it is not correct to say that consciousness is a quality of the body. Further, some have expereienced exorcism. A ghost does not have a body as we have, but it has consciousness. Besides all these, many incidents are occuring through Divine Grace. Even the scientists cannot say that they have not taken place. These are beyond wordly laws. Therefore, from these we can know that there is a power greater than the body. The SASTRAS are Supreme PRAMANA (means of knowledge). There is limit for our logic. One logic may appear right for sometime, but if a more inteligent person were to argue against it, it will be known that what we thought as right is really wrong. Balief in dry logic alone is insufficient. We also require a basis like SASTRA. The VEDAS were taught by the Lord. They are very sacred. In the VEDAS it has been mentioned that the body is different from consciousness. Therefore we have to accept that. Besides, the experiences of the JNANIS are also similar to the above. The scientists are not capable of proving these experiences wrong. Can a scientist prove that consciousness was produced only from matter. It is impossible. So far he could not do it. If asked whether he will do it in future, the answer is that he cannot prove it even in future. Let us suppose that a scientist says that he created life in his laboratory. How can it be proved that consciousness was not present in The latent form in the material he used initially? that cannot be proved at all, consciousness could have been latent initially and then could have manifested. Therefore it cannot be proved. The scientist could not prove this so far. He cannot prove in the future also. It is wrong to say that we should pay heed to the views of such scientists. We should only accept what is mentioned in our SASTRAS and it is not a rule to believe someone who puts forth logic, that too a wrong one. Of course, there are many advantages we accrue from science. There is no doubt at all about it, but it is not necessary to accept what some scientists conclude through imagination and faulty logic. It also does not mean that just because one is a scientist, one should be an atheist. Many great scientists were theists and even now there are many scientists who believe in God. Apart, this if the SASTRAS are carefully seen, we can show by different means of logic that there exists the ATMA different from the body. Therefore we should never entertain any doubt regarding the ATMA being different from the body.

37. Nature of Bondage

D : Does bondage really exist ?

A : No. If it did exit really, how can it be destroyed after the dawn of knowledge ?

D : Who has got the bondage ?

A : He who thinks has bondage has bondage.

D : Who thinks that he has bondage ? That is, in whom is the idea present that the bondage exists for oneself ?

A : You should answer that.

D : For the ATMA.

A : ATMA is of the nature of SACHIDANANDA. It does not have any kind of bondage or restriction. This is the conclusion of the SASTRAS. That it is even beyond the mind is what is said there.

D : If the bondage is not for ATMA should it not be for the mind ?

A . The mind is an inanimate object. How can it have bondage ? It is not at all possible for an inanimate object to have bondage.

D : If the bondage is neither for the ATMA nor for the mind how can bondage be present at all ?

A : Did you think of all possibilities ?

D : I have thought of everything. I have not considered a combination of the ATMA and the mind, but that too is incongruous.

A : Why ?

D : Since the nature of ATMA is different from that of the mind, how can they be together ?

A : Are heat and light the attributes of iron ?

D : No.

A : Are they the attributes of fire ?

D : Yes.

A : If an iron piece is heated for a long time what happens ?

D : The iron piece appears white hot and glows as it becomes very hot.

A : That is so. If you were not already aware that heat and light are the qualities of fire, will you not consider that they are the attributes of heated iron as they are seen in it ?

D : Yes.

A : Similarly, the mind is inert and ATMA is of the nature ot consciousness. Due to the 'light' of the ATMA, the mind appears uninanimate. Bondage is only for the JIVA, who is a combination of the mind and the ATMA. It is not as though this is for the ATMA alone or the mind alone. Such a combination is called JIVA. In reality the JIVA is the ATMA. The JIVA experiences bondage as long as he is unaware of his true nature. When the JIVA realises his true nature, he gets freed from rebirth.

D : If the JIVA so attains liberation, that MUKTI cannot exist for ever because that which has a beginning should also have an end. So even if MOKSHA is attained it must cease sometime.

A : Why ?

D : Because that which has a begining should also have an end,

A : You should keep this in mind. Bondage is unreal it is produced only because of ignorance. When it disappears, the ATMA shines with its brilliance. So this objection will not be alright as there is no real bondage. Here MOKSHA is nothing but knowing one's true nature and getting rid of the ignorance. We do not call as MOKSHA anything which has to be made new for the ATMA.

38. The Means to Attain Moksha

D : Whet is the cause of MOKSHA ?

A : BRAHMA JNANA alone is the cause of MOKSHA The SASTRAS say,

ज्ञानादेव तु कैवल्यभ् ।

(From JNANA also MOKSHA can be attained.)

तमेवं विद्वानमृत इह भवति । नान्य: पन्था
विद्यतेऽयनाय ।

(Only on knowing him does one become deathless. There is no other way.)

D : If this is so, will it not mean that KARMAS (actions) is not the direct cause of JNANA ?

A : Yes. the SASTRAS are conclusive in the is regard, For example' in SASTRAS it is said about MOKSHA–

न कर्मणा ………… ।

(Not by KARMA .....)

D : When will JNANA dawn ?

A : when the mind becomes pure and is devoid of desires will Jnana dawn.

D : Will not the mind attain purity if actions are done by dedicating them to ISHWARA ?

A : Yes, it will attain purity.

D : Then should not KARMA also be said to be the cause of MOKSHA ? This is because the mind becomes pure when KARMA is performed by dedicating it to ISHWARA. JNANA dawns on a pure mind. MOKSHA is attained only by JNANA. So should it not be said that KARMA is the cause for attaining MOKSHA.

A : Your reasoning itself shows clearly that KARMA is not the direct cause for MOKSHA. Everybody knows that the mud is the cause for pot Similarly one who makes the pot should also be a cause. Is the father of the potter also a cause? Because the potter would not have taken birth without his father and with out him, the pot could not have been produced.

D : The father of the potter cannot be considered as the cause, for if he is. we are led to take his grand father, great grand father, and infinitum into the causal fold.

A : If the same reasoning is applied here also it can be seen that KARMA is never the direct cause for MOKSHA. Further, that which is caused by KARMA will have a beginning and an end. This is so because when KARMA starts yielding fruits, there is a beginning to it. That which begins should also have an end. Hence if MOKSHA results from KARMA it cannot be permanent. However, the SASTRAS say that MOKSHA is permanent. NO SASTRA says that it is temporary. Thus the arguement is illogical. Hence it should be known that JNANA alone is the direct cause for MOKSHA.

39. Differing Views in Advaitic Texts

D : We see differing views in ADVAITIC texts themselves. For example, I have learnt from PANCHADASI that the JIVA is a reflection of the CHAITANYA (conciousness) in AVIDYA. In some other texts Brahman seen through AVIDYA is termed as JIVA. Some books contend the presence of many JIVAS. Some others say there is only one JIVA. what is the reason for such differing views ?

A : Just as the Ganges is seen branching severally before merging with the ocean, ADVAITA, which comes from SASTRAS and SRI SHANKARA BHAGAVATPADA differs widely. But all describe the supreme Being the same way because the SASTRAS themselves say–

यतो वाचो निवर्तन्ते ।

(From which mind and speech recoil.)

Though there is no variation in the Supreme Being there are certain differences in the ways of attaining it. Varigated views are seen in describing the world. All ADVAITINS say in unequivocal terms–

ब्रह्मसत्यं जगन्मिथ्या जीवो ब्रह्मैव नापरः ।

(BRAHMAN is real : the world is unreal and JIVA is verily the BRAHMAN, being not different from it.) Further, all ADVAITINS agree that JNANA alone is the cause for MOKSHA. If to a person who is highly competent and is capable of fixing the mind on the Supreme Being is said that theworld is like a dream, the TATTVA is grasped easily. To that person EKA-JIVA concept (the concept of one JIVA)is appropriate. This is what is ssid by SASTRAS also. Difficulty may arise if others are also taught in the said fashion. So, for them MULTI-JIVA concept alone is suitable. It is only to suit the widely varying capacity of the aspirants but not to impress that the JNANA to be attained is different that there are different schools of thought. SRI SURESHWARACHARYA Himself has clarified this. Thus by whatever means one gets the knowledge of the inner Self, that has to be considered proper. The means by which it can be attained are innumerable. Hence the ADVAITA TATTVA is unique but different ACHARYAS have interpreted that TATTVA in different ways with a view to preach it to the seekers in a manner that suits them. This is all about this.

40. Jnani

D : Is a JNANI beyond virtue and sin?

A : Yes.

D : Then since no merit or sin is acquired by a JNANI can he conduct himself any manner?

A : A JNANI will not do so normally. His mind should have been extremely pure prior the attaining JNANA. The same state of mind will remain even after the dawn of knowledge. Lord SRI KRISHNA has said, "If an ardent devotee by chance errs, he is not affected by that". This does not mean that the devotee should keep on erring. A JNANI is like an 'ADARSHA PURUSHA' (ideal person) to others. SRI SURESHWARACHARYA has asked-'If a JNANI were to act in any manner what is the difference between him and a dog?' That is, if a JNANI commits an error,as far as he is concerned it does not in the least affect him, but that JNANI is not eligible to guide others or to be a GURU.

D : Should SHRADDHA of a JNANI be performed after he leaves the body?

A : Yes ; if he had not taken to SANYASA his sons should perform his SHRADDHA. If he were a SANYASI, his ARADHANA should be performed.

D : A JNANI will not be reborn. What then is SHRADDHA of any purpse to him?

A . For whom ?

D : For the JNANI.

A : As far as the JNANI is concerned it serves no purpose

D : Then why should the SHRADDHA be performed?

A : Where has the duty of the relatives gone ?

D : Will ACHARYAL kindly explain ?

A : From the JNANI'S point of view performance of SHRADDHA is of no use. However, the relatives have their duty. Just because one becomes a JNANI one's relatives are not absolved of the duty. They are bound to perform those actions which the SASTRAS have prescribed for them, If, therefore, the JNANI was a GRIHASTHA, his SHRADDHA should be performed.

D : Whom should we consider a JNANI ?

A : We consider a JNANI only the one for whom the knowledge, I am not the body, mind etc., but the Supreme Being who is the nature of SATCHIDANANDA is present in experience.

D : Will JNAal have the knowledge that the body exists ?

A : A JNANI is one who has realised the true nature of the Self. It is possible that misry happiness etc.' exist in his mind just as in the minds of others, but since the mind is totally pure, he is not affected by them. To cite an example, if a seed is fried and then sown in the soil if will not sprout and grow into a tree, but it can still be eaten. So also, the mind of a JNANI would have been destroyed by the power of JNANA, but the semblance of the mind may remain. However it cannot perform any action that can lead to rebirth.

D : We see even JNANIS experiencing joys and sorrows. How can they ?

A : Let us suppose a man is rotating a handwheel. If he takes his hands off the wheel, it will come to a stop only after a few more rotations, Similarly, PRARABDHA is the cause of the JNANI'S body. Once JNANA is attained, though the connection with the body and the attachment to it are all gone, as long as PRARABDHA is in force, the body is engaged in actions. However, from an observe's perspective only the AGAMI and SANCHITA KARMAS (those which yeild friuts only later) are destroyed, but not PRARABDHA. It is expended only by experiencing it. However. from a JNANI'S stand point he has no PRARABDHA, neither the body nor the mind. The knowledge of one's own Self alone remains.

D . Would he have realised his true nature in all the three states, namely, the walking, the dream and the deep sleep ?

A : Yes. He would have realised it in all the states.

D : What will be his experience when he looks at the world ?

A : 'Nothing is different from me : there is no universe different from ATMA'–this does he know by experience.

D : Why are JNANIS compassionate ?

A : Prior to the dawn of knowledge the mind should have been very pure ; JNANA dawns only after the mind is purified. After JNANA dawns, compassion manifests itself more prominently, They appear to be existing for themselves but it should be said that their body and mind are indeed for the sake of others. They have nothing to be attained through any action. They are ever content, having attained what is to be attained. Therefore it may be said that they live only for the welfare of others.

D : Can even JNANIS have devotion to ISHWARA ?

A : When it is accepted that a JNANI can and does breathe, why is the doubt regarding his being devoted to ISHWARA ? The glory of the Lord is supreme and infinite. So even a JNANI'S mind can praise ISHWARA. This does not mean that he has realised his own true nature, Though he has realised the TATTVA the body and the mind can be engaged in actions pertaining to devotion towards ISHWARA. We hear from the BHAGAVATA.

आत्मारामश्च मुनयो निर्ग्रन्था अप्युरुक्रमे ।
कुर्वन्त्यहेतुकीं भक्तिमित्थंभूतगुणो हरिः ॥

(The sages who remain reposed in the Self and are without any attachment also have infinite devotion to ISHWARA without any specific reason. Such is the Lord's glory).

D : To which world will a JNANI or a JEEVAN-MUKTHA go after death ?

A : He will not go to any world, he always remains as BRAHMAN. After his death we refer to him as a VIDEHA MUKTHA. The SASTRAS say that he who has attained JNANA attains immortality. He realises BRAHMAN here itself. After death he is not differentiated from BRAHMAN. Thus do the SASTRAS say–'He dwells in BRAHMAN and remains as such'.

D : Will a JNANI desire SAMADHI ? Is there any need for him to remain in that state ?

A : JNANI has neither the need nor otherwise to attain SAMADHI. Be it SAMADHI or DHYANA, they are mere mental states. He is beyond all those. Considering the depth of a JNANI'S experience in SAMADHI, we say that one is superior to another. This can be with regard to the observer as mentioned in the SASTRAS. That as, far as the observer is concerned gradations such as 'He is a greater JNANI', and the like may appear but as far as the JNANIS are concerned, there is no such differentiation at all. A JNANt involved in worldly activities is referred to as a BRAHMAVID if a JNANI has the practice of going into SAMADHI and coming out on his own, he is BRAHMAVIDVARA. If he can be awakened from SAMADHI only by the efforts of others he is a BRAHMAVIDVARIYAAN. A BRAHMAVIDVARISHTHA will never return once he goes into SAMADHI, his body will be destroyed while he continues to be in SAMADHI. As a BRAHMAVIDVARISHTHA also has the best PRARABDHA, he indeed is the greatest JNANI as seen from the observer's view point

D : If engaged in actions, will JNANIS also have the experiences of happiness and misery ?

A : Yes ; they too experience pain etc ; but their mind being very pure they will not pay heed to this. As an illustration, let us consider the case of a warrior. He does not cease firing even if he is wounded So also, a JNANI will not give room to an ill-feeling even if another person were to put him to misery. Knowledge of his true nature would have dawned due to AKHANDAKARA VRITTI which the mind would have experienced at least once. Therefore the JNANI'S mind would have been trained to withstand misery. Similarly, happiness does not elate his mind as he is mentally aware that the world is nothing but mere experience.

D : Can JNANIS get dreams ?

A : Why not ? They can certainly get dreams. Just as the JNANI sees the universe in the waking state he can witness the dream realising that the world is unreal. Although there is no hard and fast rule that it should not occur in a particular fashion and so on, I just told you the existing situation.

D : What purpose is served by becoming a JNANI ?

A : If one attains JNANA one can become a JEEVANMUKTHA. As a result of this one is freed from all sorts of bondages. Supreme Bliss can be experienced. A JNANI will never be reborn, for he would have attained that which is to be attained. What more need be said beyond this ?

Even in the UPANISHAD it has been said–

भिद्यते हृदयग्रन्थिश्छिद्यन्ते सर्वसंशयाः ।
क्षीयन्ते चास्य कर्माणि तस्मन्दृष्टे परावरे ॥

(on realising the Supreme Being which is the cause and the effect, the knots of the heart are torn asunder. doubts are set at rest and his KARMAS come te an end.) The JEEVAN MUKTHI state is indeed the highest that one should attain.

D . What is the reason for two JEEVANMUKTHAS to advise in two different ways ?

A : A JEEVANMUKTHA is one who has realised that he is the ATMA- Though there is no difference in the BRAHMA JNANA as such, they could have followed different SADHANAS for its attainment and may so advise others in accordance with their differing views. Advice may also be given keeping in mind the competence of the disciple. Futher, one JNANI may advise a certain disciple in a particular manner while another may advise a second disciple in a different manner. So there is no room for an enquiry whether what one says is proper or what the other says is faulty, and so on. A JEEVENMUKTHA will lead his disciple along the path of virtue. This apart, the mental states dieffer from one JNANI to another. There fore they can render advice in different ways. We need not enquire as to which is proper and which is not. Any advice acceptable to the SASTRAS is free from faults, but not otherwise. This is all what can be said here.

41. Siddhis

D: Wiil JNANIS have all sorts of SIDDHIS always?

A : NO ; if the PRARABDHA of a JNANI is such that he should have the SIDDHIS we can see them in him. If the JNANI desires he can get any SIDDHI, but it is open to question whether such a desire will occur or not

D : Do SIDDHIS indicate one's attainment of a high state in spiritual life ?

A : No ; SIDDHIS can also be obtained by the use of some herbs and through the worship of certain evil spirits.

D : Is a JNANI affected by SIDDHIS in any way ?

A : No ; he does not care in the least for SIDDHIS. He may or may not get them, but he does not bother about them at all.

D : Can it be said that all that is seen in a magic show is mere delusion or that it is produced due to some other power ?

A : Normally, if something is done just by the trick of the hands or indirectly, it is to be considered as INDRAJALA. Sometimes all these can happen even through a special power.

D : Some people cure diseases like jaundice with great ease. For example, if water is kept in a vessel and something is done with that, the water becomes yellowish. The patient's eyes become normal and the disease is also cured. How do such incidents occur ?

A : Normally they take place through the powers of a MANTRA, although they can occur through some other means. Generally, those who cure diseases in this manner do not accept money for this ; they do this only as a service. As far as I have seen, if they teach that method to other people the potency of those MANTRAS is lost.

D : Then how do they teach other people ?

A : Normally, they retire after teaching it to their sons or disciples.

D : Sometimes we find VIBHUTI (holy ash) falling from a photograph and such similar incidents. Will Acharyal kindly clarify as to how they can occur ?

A : Sometimes such things may happen owing to the power of an evil spirit. At other times, they can occur by one's SANKALPA (resolution). Besides, there is also an important reason, namely, that sometimes ISWARA may will that such events occur to show His presence.

42. Sri Adishankara

D : Some people assert hat ADISHANKARA was born in A D. while some others say that He was born in B. C. Of these which is the correct view ?

A : ADISHANKARA was only in the A D. period ; not in B C. ADISHANKARA and SURESHWARA have contradicted DHARMAKIRTI, a Buddhist philosopher. It is known from a chinese traveller's accounts that DHARMAKIRTI lived only in A. D. SO it is obvious that SHANKARA also lived in A.D. What I have mentioned here is just one evidence. There are many other evidences like this. It is not proper to push back the period of a great individual just with the notion that he could have been a great soul only if he had incarnated thousands of years ago ; could he not have been a great soul if he had lived in recent times ? By all means he could have been one !

D : Is there a good compilation giving the life account of SHANKARA ?

A : Yes ; there is one titled MADHAVIYA-SHANKARA VIJAYA. It is a very good text. It is spoken of as having been written by SRI-VIDYARANYA. By reading this, the life history of SHANKARA can be understood well.

D : SHANKARA is referred to as SHANMATHA STHAPAKA. Did He establish six philosophies separately ?

A : It is normal to refer to SHANKARA as the SHANMATHA STHAPAKA, but the idea behind this is misleading. If He had established six philosophies which one of them is His own ? If it is asked whether He had a philosophy for Himself, the answer is, Yes ; and that is ADVAITA. So, why should He create philosophies other than His own ? Nobody has either the difference of opinion or a doubt obout His principle being ADVAITA alone. ISHWARA has no form. He assumes many forms to shower His grace on His devotees. In whichever from one has devotion can one worship that form. You may be a worshipper of SHIVA but on that account do not hate VISHNU. Similarly, you may be a worshipper of VISHNU but you should not condemn SHIVA–thus alone did SHANKARA advise but He did not establish six philosophies. Even though the word SHANMATHA STHAPAKA has come into practice we need not attach special meaning to it. We all should know that He only propounded ADVAITA philosophy that was taught by SASTRA. Many kinds of worship were in vogue during His period and SHANKARA merely corrected the people by advising that one should not condemn the diety worshipped by another. That is all.

D : In which places did SHANKARA establish Mutts?

A : He has established four Mutts in the four corners of India and has associated one VEDA with each of the Mutts. In the East He established a Mutt at puri and appointed HASTAMALAKA as the first pontiff. The VEDA assigned to that Mutt by SHANKARA was the Rig Veda. Its MAHAVAKYA is–

प्रज्ञानं ब्रह्म ।

(Every Veda has a sentence indicating the identity of the JIVA with the BRAHMAN. Four such sentences found one each in the four VEDAS are called MAHAVAKYAS.)

In the West Dwaraka, He established a Mutt and appointed PADMAPADA there. The Veda assigned to that Mutt is SAMA VEDA; its MAHAVAKYA is.

तत्त्वमसि ।

In the North He established the Jyotir Mutt at Badri and appointed TOTAKACHARYA as the PEETADHIPATHI there. Its VEDA is the ATHARVANA VEDA and its MAHAVAKYA is-

अयमात्मा ब्रह्म ।

In the South at SRINGERI, he established the SARADA PEETHA and appointed SURESWARACHARYA as the first head. The VEDA assigned to the SRINGERI MATH is the YAJUR VEDA. Its MAHAVAKYA is

अहं ब्रह्मास्मि ।

D: Where did ADISHANKARA attain SIDDHI ?

A: If can be known from tradition as well as from the MADHAVIYA SANKARA VIJAYA that SHANKARA attained SIDDHI at KEDARNATH.

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